

David's Early Years : Day Share - February to April 2021

13 April 2021 19:47

David: A Crazy Mixed Up World 28/02/2021

Maybe, that's a good description of our world today. The political and religious context in which David was born was chaotic and unsettled. The small kingdom of Israel looked as if it would not survive because it was surrounded by hostile neighbours who hated these newcomers who had travelled across the desert *en masse* from Egypt and were now living in their territory.

Some years have passed by the time of the story of David which is recounted in the book of 1st Samuel, but Israel still has many enemies. David is well known for his battle against the Philistine giant but these people were powerful enemies of Israel. They lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. There are other three enemy tribes in the above map - the Moabites (remember that Ruth was from Moab), the Midianites and the Ammonites. The Israelites had been forced to occupy hilly and mountainous territory which was less fertile but even then they were under constant attack from their powerful, hostile neighbours. Their enemies would attack them and steal their animals or destroy their crops.

These other nations were pagans who worshipped a variety of idols. Here is one god named Baal but there were many others and pagans turned to these gods to bring fertility to their women or their animals or to help them to wage war or to bring them good weather. The God of Israel was not made out of stone or metal or wood. He was invisible but of course he was all powerful One and the Israelites had a massive advantage if they had as a nation been loyal to Yahweh or Jehovah. Instead, the Israelites were always attracted to these man-made gods instead of worshipping the LORD God of Israel.

The book of Judges describes a very sad time of lawlessness, godlessness and chaos. I have a PowerPoint on the book of Judges, which goes into more detail. [See separate PDF called Lessons from the Book of Judges] The first chapters of 1 Samuel describes the time of Israel's first king - a man named Saul. It was the people of Israel who wanted to have a king so that they could be more like their enemies who all had kings. Israel did not need a king - they needed to obey their invisible ruler, Jehovah. Instead, they continued in their disobedience. However, they imagined that their problems would be solved if they had strong leadership. Samuel pointed out that a king would bring added problems to the Israelites. Samuel said that they would soon discover that a king wanted to take from his people - he would want them to fight for him and to provide him with wealth and luxuries at the expense of the ordinary people. However, God granted their request and allowed them to have a king.

Saul, Israel's first king was a tall, powerful figure and his reign got off to a good start. Saul displayed some humility and he protests to Samuel that he comes from one of the less powerful of the 12 tribes - the tribe of Benjamin and his family are not famous or wealthy. [1 Samuel 9: 21] The Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul to equip him for the task ahead and the Bible says that 'God gave him another heart' (obviously not referring to a heart transplant). But Saul disobeyed God when he became impatient because Samuel had not arrived to administer the sacrifice at the commencement of a great battle against the Philistines. The army was steadily dwindling in numbers as they waited for the arrival of the prophet and the priest - and so Saul acted foolishly and impetuously by conducting the sacrifice himself - something which he was not permitted to do. [1 Samuel 13] He also disobeyed God when he was instructed to destroy all the Amalekites and not to spare anyone or any animal. Saul chose to be selective in his obedience. He spared the king of the Amalekites - a man named Agag and he also kept alive the best of the sheep and the oxen and the lambs. When Samuel arrived he told him that he had followed God's command and when Samuel challenged him by saying, "Why do I hear the bleating of the sheep?" Saul then blamed the people for this sin of disobedience. [1 Samuel 15]

God decided that Saul's reign as king of Israel was ended. God instructed Samuel to replace Samuel with another king - and David was chosen to be the next king. That is the subject of the next Day Share. However, Saul was very reluctant to give up the throne and there was a long struggle before David took over as king.

So David became king at a very challenging time. There was a lack of unity across the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. They faced enemies who exploited their weakness. The nation had turned its back on the God who had delivered them from Egypt and had led them across the desert to the promised land of Canaan. Israel had failed to follow God over the period of the Judges despite the many times when God used a Judge to deliver them from their enemies for a time. The people simply went back to their old sinful ways. Israel's first king had **not** been a successful ruler and had been displaced by God. However, Saul was not prepared to accept this new king and was intensely jealous of David's growing popularity. But David was God's man for the crisis - a man after God's own heart.

Maybe God has called you and me to serve him - perhaps not as king of Israel but he wants you to follow his plan for your life. He has a special task for you and me - even at my age. We may decide that things are too difficult

and we are living in a crazy world. But God uses humans to serve him despite the chaos and the godlessness. We need to trust Him and commit our lives to Him.

David: Left Outside 02/03/2021

Read 1 Samuel Chapter 16 and verses 1 to 13.

I have a memory from my two years at Stevenston High School before I sat the entrance exam for Ardrossan Academy. I was rubbish at sport - especially football and I remember that our PE teacher used to choose the two most talented football players and gave them the task of picking the two teams to compete with each other during the lesson. I was always left sitting on the bench as neither of the two superstars both named John would pick me for their team. "It's your turn this week. I had him last week." It did not do much for my self-esteem. I told David Campbell that I played left outside at football - he corrected me. "Do you not mean 'Outside Left?'" he said. "No, I really mean 'Left Outside.'" But I was in good company. David (not David Campbell) was also 'left outside' - but not by his classmates - more by his brothers. And it was nothing to do with his lack of sporting talent.

They had a very important visitor to the Jesse household. It's not every day that the prophet arrives in the village of Bethlehem - before it was famous as the birthplace of Jesus. It was not an important village and Jesse, David's father was not an important guy in the village. There was a signpost on the door- "Ordinary". It was a big family and I don't see any mention of a mother or a sister. I am not saying that there were no females in the family- only they are not mentioned.

Samuel, the prophet and priest, was well-respected and he had come on an important mission. He was there to choose Israel's new king. Had the other king died? No, he was alive and healthy with no intention of giving up the throne. But God had decided that Saul's time as king was over. He had given Samuel instructions to choose a successor to Saul and the replacement was to come from Jesse's family of sons. They were an impressive bunch of lads - tall and rugged looking. All seven of them looked as if they would fit the bill for the next king. Much of the new king's role would be to act as war leader because Israel was constantly at war with her neighbours. So height would seem to be an important consideration - as well as physique- you did not want a weakling as a king. He would have to do a lot of hand-to-hand fighting and be able to wield a sword.

So Samuel asks Jesse to present his sons one by one to him beginning with the oldest and going down the line to the youngest. Samuel had learned to listen to God. It was as if he had an earpiece linked to a radio tuned into God's voice. When he saw the eldest son, Samuel thought his task was over. Eliab fitted the bill perfectly. But God gave very clear instructions to Samuel that Eliab was not to be the next king. God told Samuel not to be impressed by this young man's height or physical appearance because God had not chosen him as the new king. God made a statement to Samuel that applies to our day too. The Lord does not look at a person the way we humans do - we judge by external appearances but the Lord looks on the heart. We will discover that Eliab was proud and haughty and pride is a major obstacle to serving God. The next two sons were presented to Samuel- their names were Abinadab and Shammah. God rejected these two young men as being suitable as the next king of Israel. Samuel went through the same process with all of Jesse's sons.

So Samuel asks Jesse an awkward question, "Have I seen all of your sons?" Surely, you have not forgotten about one of your sons. And then comes the confession from Jesse. "Well, there is the youngest, but he is not at home. He is looking after his sheep." It seems that Jesse does not value all his sons equally. He probably expected Samuel to choose Eliab anyway so there is no need to send for the wee one. I get the impression that Jesse treats David as an afterthought - a nonentity. Samuel insists that they send for David and he makes it clear that he wants him brought speedily. When David arrives, we discover that David is handsome - he is ruddy - a fresh complexion from being out in the open air all day, and he is described as having beautiful eyes. This might seem a contradiction because God had told Samuel not to judge by outward appearances and yet we have a description of David as a good looking. This is not why David was chosen as king, though. It was not his looks but his character which mattered to God. God instructed Samuel that David was the one who was to be the next king of Israel and Samuel then anoints David as king. The next Day Share will look at this anointing in more detail.

There are two lessons from today's study

1. We may be regarded as an outsider by society and even by our friends and family but there are no outsiders with God. In fact, God often chose the marginalised for His service. We could think of many examples where God chose those who were considered insignificant to serve Him.
2. We should not be influenced by our society's emphasis on outward appearance. The world seems to tell us that what matters is how we look. My boss once told me that 'appearance is everything' when my collar was turned up at an important meeting. I am not suggesting that we should totally forget about how we look. I am suggesting that we need to get this into correct perspective. God is more interested in our spiritual state than our physical appearance.

David: God's Anointed 04/03/2021

The Bible records that David was anointed three times. Firstly, he was anointed by Samuel at Bethlehem at the same time as the events described in the last Day Share when God guided Samuel to choose David (and not any of his seven brothers) as the next king of Israel. [1 Samuel 16:13] Much later after the death of King Saul, he was anointed by the men of Judah when they came to Hebron and they anointed David as king of the house of Judah.

[S Samuel 2:4] David belonged to the tribe of Judah so he was only king of his own clan. Then he was anointed for a third time again at Hebron when all the elders of Israel chose to anoint him as king. [2 Samuel 5:3] So this is when he became king of the whole nation of Israel - all 12 tribes.

I want to look at two things in today's study

1. What is meant by anointing? What does this mean?
2. The time span involved in these three anointings. What time elapsed between the first anointing and the second and third anointings.

Firstly, what is meant by anointing? Anointing the body or head with oil (most likely olive oil) was apparently a common practice among the Jews in Old Testament times. Here are three references to this practice [Deuteronomy 28:40; Ruth 3:3 and Micah 6:15]. It was almost certainly practised by other nations in the lands around Israel. However, there was a rite or religious ceremony associated with the appointment of the three main offices in the kingdom of Israel. Prophets were anointed with oil - for example, Elisha was anointed as prophet as the successor to Elijah (1 Kings 19:16). Prophets were referred to as the anointed ones or messiahs (1 Chronicles 16:22 and Psalm 105:15). Priests were also anointed before they took up this important role - at first, all priests were anointed (Exodus 40:15; Numbers 3:3) but later on this ceremony was only for the high priest (Exodus 29:29; Leviticus 16:32) Kings were anointed too - God had given instructions to Samuel to go and anoint Saul to make him king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:16) and this event is described in the next chapter when Saul, was anointed as the first king of Israel.

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. [1 Samuel 10:1 ESV]

Notice that Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it over Saul's head and this was a sign that he was a king - the word 'prince' or leader is used in this verse. This ceremony was very important and it marked this man Saul out as God's chosen king. There is no mention of a coronation as happens in the United Kingdom. At one stage in the long struggle between David and Saul, there was an occasion when David had an ideal opportunity to kill Saul and he did not take it because Saul was God's anointed. (1 Samuel 24)

So Samuel anointed David in front of all his big brothers. This was a fairly private affair, however, as it would appear that there was only Samuel and the members of David's own family present to witness the event.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah. [1 Samuel 16:13 ESV]

This does not mean that David immediately becomes king, however. **This leads us to the second part of our study today. David was anointed three times - but there was a significant gap between these three anointing ceremonies.** The first time David was only a young lad when he was anointed by Samuel and Saul was still king. Saul was not prepared to hand over the throne to this young lad. Many years would pass and David would not become king until Saul had died. We are not told what age David was when he was first anointed by Samuel. I am going to suggest that he was still a teenager. He was not considered old enough to go to fight the Philistines when he killed Goliath and this anointing took place before the big battle. We know what age he was when he was anointed the second time - thirty years old. [See 2 Samuel 5:4 - 5] So this makes it clear that perhaps as many as 15 years elapsed before David ascended the throne and then he was only king of part of the kingdom - he was king of Judah. He had to wait another 7 years before he was king of all Israel.

That is a long time to wait. But this was all part of God's plan for David. God had chosen his king but he had to prepare him for the responsibility of ruling over His own people. David had to be transformed from a naïve shepherd boy to a king. Through trials and triumphs, God taught David many important lessons in the preparatory school for kingship,

How did David's brothers react to all of this? This significant rite of David's anointing was witnessed by his older brothers. They must have wondered when David, their young brother would take the throne. The conversation between Eliab and David prior to the defeat of Goliath gives a hint that there is ongoing tension in the family. The delay in the fulfilment of the promise contained in the anointing provided fuel for the fire of their resentment. This young upstart of a brother had the brazen cheek to turn up at the battlefield and ask awkward questions about the weakness of Saul's army against the Philistine. I am not sure how they would react when David killed the giant who had paralysed the whole army with fear. But this victory did not immediately result in David ascending the throne of Israel. Saul would continue to hold on to the throne and would become more and more jealous of David - especially when he became more popular with the people than Saul. We will spend several Day Shares looking at David's experiences as he waited for God's time.

Sometimes God teaches us a lesson in patiently waiting for his time to act. We often want God to follow our timescale and we wonder why he is taking so long to fulfil his promises to us. Many generations have waited for the second coming of the Lord. When I was a boy, I used to hear about godly couples who started the day with the thought that they called 'Perhaps Today.' They were eagerly anticipating the coming of the Lord Jesus and they expected it that day. They went home to be with their Lord many years ago and we are still awaiting the coming of the Lord. Are we still as eager for His return as these couples were so many years ago when life was so

much simpler and they had fewer material possessions.

Perhaps you have been waiting for God to act in your life. I know that we have become impatient because we are still restricted in our movements and activities because of Covid-19. Janie and I are longing to meet up with our grandchildren and their parents. We are longing to hug them tightly and to share a meal with them. God is teaching us a lesson in patience.

Great David's Greater Son 06/03/2021

Hail to the Lord's anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression.
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.

Before Christmas 2020, I read a book (on Kindle) called The Life of David by A.W. Pink. Arthur Wallington Pink was born in Nottingham in 1886. Before he became a Christian, he was a spiritualist medium. After his conversion, he attended the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and pastored several churches in the United States and Australia before returning to the UK in 1934. He chose to settle in Stornoway in the Island of Lewis where he chose to live in obscurity and he died almost unnoticed in 1952. His writing is very dated and his style of writing is very different from mine. Arthur Pink has also a different emphasis in his writings. It is what the Bible scholars call typology. He draws out comparisons between the Old Testament characters and the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have tended to draw practical lessons from their lives but today we are going to make an exception and focus on how David is a picture of Jesus.

The verse of the hymn quoted above speaks of our Saviour as 'the Lord's anointed' and speaks of Him as 'Great David's greater Son!' Of course, David was the best known king of Israel and as we saw in the last Day Share he was anointed three times. David did not become king immediately after his anointing. He had to wait for perhaps 15 years. Our Saviour was the Lord's anointed but he was rejected as king of Israel and above His cross they put the telling words - 'Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews.' This was not intended as a compliment - it was a sarcastic comment on Jesus' claim to be king. This is what happens to those who claim to be king while the Romans are ruling Israel. But it was not just the Romans who did not want Him to be king. The Jewish people had also decided that they did not want him. Our hymn looks forward to the future when Jesus will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This coming event is good news for us as we look at the mess the world is in presently.

A.W. Pink suggests that our Lord Jesus was also anointed three times (just the same as David). According to Pink, the three anointings were as follows

1. His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit - as described by the angel to Mary - "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God.*" [Luke 1:35 ESV]
2. He was publicly "anointed with the Spirit" (See Acts 10:38) at his baptism and this equipped Him for His public ministry or service. Here is a passage from the prophet Isaiah which confirms this.
*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;* [Isaiah 61:1 ESV]
3. His ascension was the third anointing when Jesus was received back into heaven. This is described in the first chapter of the book of the Acts. He has just promised his disciples that they would receive power from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. [Acts 1: 9 ESV] You might be wondering why the word anointing is not used in the Acts. However, Pink refers to a Psalm which speaks about the Lord 'being anointed with the oil of gladness above his companions.' Pink links this passage with the Lord's ascension back to heaven. Here is the full quotation from the Psalm
*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
The sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness;
you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;* [Psalm 45 6-7 ESV]

There are several parallels between David from the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus. The word "Messiah" or "Christ" means 'the anointed one.' David came from an obscure village (Bethlehem) which was described as 'little among the thousands of Judah' (Micah 5:2) Of course, Jesus was born in Bethlehem although Mary and Joseph came from Nazareth. David was the youngest in his family and was treated with disdain and contempt by his brothers and even by his father. Our Lord Jesus was 'despised and rejected by people' [Isaiah 53:3 NET]. The Message translates this same phrase as 'He was looked down on and passed over.' Even after he was anointed as king, David was still looked down on and passed over - especially by Saul. He spent many years as a fugitive - hiding in caves despite the fact that he had been anointed as Israel's next king.

In today's Day Share, we are providing a video of Anne Smith from our own church playing this hymn for us. [See the Anne Smith Channel on the website] I have also provided a brief history of the hymn writer - James Montgomery who was born in Irvine in 1771 and died in Sheffield in 1854. I hope that the video will help you to sing along to the hymn. Many of us have been missing the singing at church and so this provides an opportunity to sing along to a lovely old hymn. It also is uplifting to look forward to a better day in the future. The Lord's Anointed One is rejected by the world but He is coming back and he will set up His kingdom on earth. We will reign with Him in glory. This is something to sing about and to look forward to.

James Montgomery - Scottish-born Hymnwriter 06/03/2021

The writer of the hymn that we are focusing on today was a man by the name of James Montgomery. He was born in Irvine in North Ayrshire in 1771 and he died in Sheffield in 1854. (Incidentally, before I retired I worked in Irvine not far away from his birthplace. Anne Smith, our musician, grew up in Ayrshire so there is a strong connection with Burns country this morning.)

James Montgomery's father was a pastor and missionary in a Christian group known as the Moravian Brethren. The young James was sent to train at the Moravian School at Fulneck, near Leeds so his connection with Ayrshire is very short-lived. His parents went out to be missionaries in the West Indies and he never saw them again as they both died out there within a year of each other. James was not permitted to study anything secular - he was supposed only to study the Bible. However, it appears that James was able to borrow books of poetry and he decided that he was going to be a poet. He never completed his scholarship at the Moravian School and he was apprenticed to a baker in Mirfield then to a store-keeper in Wath-upon-Deerne. He tried to launch a literary career in London but he was unsuccessful and he moved north to Sheffield in 1792.

This was a time of great political unrest. The French Revolution had broken out in 1789 and in 1792 France and Britain went to war because Britain was afraid that the revolutionary ideas would spread from France to Britain. It is surprising then that James Montgomery was an outspoken supporter of the French Revolution. In 1795 he printed a poem celebrating the fall of the Bastille - the event which has sparked off the revolution in France. By this stage Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette had been executed by the notorious guillotine and many French aristocrats suffered the same fate. The British royal family and the aristocracy were very afraid that such dangerous political views would travel to Britain. So Montgomery spent time in prison for 'sedition' - which means going against the state. In 1796, Montgomery found himself in prison again because he had criticised a magistrate who had forcibly dispersed a political protest in Sheffield.

James Montgomery became the editor of the Sheffield Iris - the only newspaper in Sheffield. He also wrote poetry - such as *The Wanderer of Switzerland* (1806), *The World before the Flood*, *The West Indies* (a poem denouncing slavery); *The Climbing Boys* (about the abuse of young boys having to clean chimneys); *Greenland*; *The Pelican Island*.

Montgomery suggested that his name would be remembered not for his poetry but for his hymns. He wrote the following hymns

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Prayer is the Soul's Sincere Desire

Stand up and Bless the Lord

Angels from the Realms of Glory

The Lord is My Shepherd (based on Psalm 23)

In 1822 Montgomery published a collection of hymns entitled - *Songs of Zion: Being Imitations of Psalms*. During his life he composed around 400 hymns but most of these are no longer sung in churches or congregations today.

James Montgomery never married and he died in April 1854 and was buried in Sheffield General Cemetery. In 1861 a monument was erected over his grave at a cost of £1000 which was raised by public subscription. It was the Sheffield Sunday School Union which took the initiative in erecting this memorial. He had been one of the founding members of this organisation. Here is the inscription

"Here lies interred, beloved by all who knew him, the Christian poet, patriot and philanthropist. Wherever poetry is read, or Christian hymns sung in the English, 'he being dead, yet speaketh' by the genius, piety and taste embodied in his writings."

I have been reflecting not so much on his poetry and hymn writing but on his involvement in politics. There are other examples of evangelical Christians who fought against social injustice in 19th Century Britain - Shaftesbury and Wilberforce, for example. What is unusual about James Montgomery is that he was a radical politically - and was a supporter of the French Revolution. Most Christians were more conservative in their political outlook. James Montgomery was passionate about condemning social injustice and pre-revolutionary France (the *ancien regime*) provided abundant examples of unfairness and injustice. The French Revolution was brutal and was anything but Christian. It was even more evil than the political system it had overthrown. Britain too was also in need of political, economic and social reform during the lifetime of this hymn writer. It raises the question of whether the Christian should be active in politics - especially in condemning injustice and abuse. The Lord's reply to Pilate during the mockery of a trial was, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might be delivered over to the Jews." Jesus did not condemn the injustice of the Roman empire or denounce slavery.

At the same time, I have concerns that evangelical Christians have become associated with a narrow right-wing

political agenda which seems to accept and condone abuse of women, rampant materialism and profiteering by big business, racial inequality and other forms of discrimination. My limited experience of being an officer in local government working alongside politicians of several political parties has made me sceptical of partisan politics. I think we need to pray for the minority of politicians at Westminster and Holyrood who are committed Christians that they will be able to serve the Lord faithfully and remain true to their conscience.

David: Music Therapy for Angry King 08/03/2021

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23

I have a personal interest in today's subject. Our youngest daughter, Fiona Crow, is a music therapist. She took her first degree in music specialising in playing the flute. After her marriage, she went back to university to study to become a music therapist. There are not many practising music therapists in Scotland. Music therapy has been shown to alleviate the symptoms of dementia and anxiety as well as autism and other disabilities. We all know that music affects our emotions. It has the ability to make us sad and reflective, or to cheer us up. It can provide peace and calm when we are distressed. It is interesting to discover that away back in the Old Testament, David was applying the skills of a music therapist for a king who was resentful, severely distressed and perhaps mentally ill.

We are told that the Holy Spirit departed from Saul and a harmful spirit from the Lord troubled him. [1 Samuel 16:14] The same Holy Spirit had rushed upon David after his anointing. Saul's servants were concerned about the king's condition. At this stage we are not given precise details about how he was affected by this harmful spirit but there are many instances of Saul's uncontrolled anger and his tendency to act violently (e.g. 1 Samuel 18:10-11) If Saul was behaving with such unpredictable violence, it is hardly surprising that the servants suggest action. They make the suggestion that they should search for someone who is a good lyre player (the lyre was a type of harp) to play his instrument to calm down Saul when he was distressed by this harmful spirit.

The Kindle book I read on [The Life of David](#) is very critical of this suggestion. A. W. Pink says that Saul should have repented of his actions and his rebellious attitude and he should have sent for Samuel to pray with him. Saul needed to make his peace with God. Pink sees the harp playing as indulging in the senses of the body in order to drown Saul's sorrow. Personally, I think that Pink is being a bit sanctimonious. He seems to be condemning music and suggesting that this is fleshly. David himself used his love of music for God's glory and for the blessing of other people. However, it is true, however, that Saul needed to repent.

It is interesting that when Saul agreed to the suggestion from his servants, it was David who was proposed as the ideal candidate for the undesirable task of calming down a violent, impulsive king. David came with a good character reference. He met all the criteria for the post of music therapist. Here are David's credentials

- Suited for life at the royal court - (a man of good presence)
- A skilful harp or lyre player.
- Known for his courage and wisdom (a man of valour, prudent in speech)
- A warrior - a man of war (he had killed a bear and a lion who were attacking his flock of sheep).

Saul sent messengers to Jesse (David's father) to invite David to the palace. There is considerable irony in all of this - God had told Samuel to tell Saul that the Lord had taken the kingdom away from him - in other words, he was not going to continue to be king. Samuel told Saul that God had given the kingdom of Israel to 'his neighbour who was better than him.' Little did Saul realise that this young lad from a poor unknown family was God's replacement king.

When Jesse instructed David to go to the palace to serve the king as a musician, David did not hesitate or complain. He might have thought that this was a trick to get rid of him. He might have argued that he was the new ruler - not the servant to the old king. David, however, was not cynical or suspicious. He had complete faith in God. Jesse had to give a gift to Saul for the privilege of allowing his son to serve at the royal court (a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat). It is always interesting that even today the Queen receives lavish gifts from all around the world. There is no mention of Saul paying the young lad for his services to the troubled monarch.

So David is anointed as king, but he is called to serve in the palace of the king. It was not God's time for him to occupy the throne. Pink put it like this - "An unsophisticated shepherd boy needed training." It is amazing that God had arranged for David to spend time in the royal court - David did not need to scheme or to plot to gain his entrance to the palace. God set this up for him. Here is the sequence of events which had to happen in order for David to spend time in Saul's palace as his 'music therapist.'

- A harmful spirit from the Lord troubles the King
- Courtiers were concerned about this
- Plan proposed to alleviate Saul's anxiety
- Saul approved of this plan
- David was mentioned as suitable lyre player
- King gave his approval to David's appointment
- Jesse did not object
- David agreed to accept this humble position at court.

The Lord is omniscient and omnipotent. He knows everything and is all powerful. He is in sovereign control - not the rejected King Saul.

There have been times when I have marvelled at the sequence of unlikely events that have led me to be where God wants me to be serving Him. "It is only the eye of faith that looks above the ordinary happenings of daily life and sees the divine hand ordering and shaping them for the accomplishment of God's counsels and the good of His people. [A.W. Pink: The Life of David] God's hand was in all of these events.

And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favour in my sight." And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him. [1 Samuel 16:22- 23 ESV]

Pink suggests that this success was nothing to do with David's skill in playing the harp (lyre). I disagree. God used David's talents for His glory and accomplished his will for David. If we have a gift (and this is not limited to musical ability) we should be using this gift in God's service for His glory. We should not be seeking popularity or fame but seeking to serve the Lord humbly with the gifts God has graciously given us.

David: Crisis for Israel 10/03/2021

We all know the story of David and Goliath very well. We might have heard it many times at Sunday School or even at school. Even people who do not know the Bible very well have heard of David and Goliath.

Israel is facing a huge crisis. They are fighting the Philistines who were Israel's constant enemies. They are more powerful and better armed than the Israelites. The battle is taking place in the Valley of Elah. There are two hills - on the one hillside there is the Israelite army and on the other side there are the Philistines. The Israelites can easily identify their enemy - there is a valley between. Sometimes, it is not as easy to identify our enemy. Satan is very subtle and he can disguise himself as harmless. Sometimes we are not aware that someone we know is being used by Satan. The best example is Judas - he was one of the 12 apostles and the other eleven did not suspect that he was about to betray Jesus.

And Israel's enemy was very visible to them. Goliath was huge and was very well armed. He is nearly 3 metres tall (9 foot 9 inches) and his armament was the most advanced for that time. His shield covered his whole body. Most of his armour was bronze - apart from the tip of his sword which was iron. This was just the beginning of the Iron Age. The iron tip of the shield weighed about 15 lbs or 6.6 kg. That is really heavy. Goliath's coat of mail weighed 125 lbs or 55 kg. Goliath is a champion - the idea is that he will represent the Philistines in a battle and they should provide someone to match him. That is going to be challenging. Saul is supposed to be Israel's champion and he was described as "from the shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people." [1 Samuel 9:2] I guess he might have been as tall as the Director of Keswick Ministries - James Robson - 6 foot 7 inches. I get a crick in my neck having a conversation with him. But Goliath was probably 3 feet taller than Saul. And Saul's armour was no match for Goliath.

But that is not the issue. This is how the world assesses this situation. Israel had Yahweh or Jehovah on their side. So the Philistines should have been defeated easily. Their 'gods' were no match for Israel's God. They were a figment of their imagination. The crisis was spiritual. The Israelites were in a poor spiritual condition. Saul, for example, was afflicted by a harmful spirit and he was out of touch with God. He had deliberately disobeyed God and the Holy Spirit had left him. His son, Jonathan had won victories in the past but he is not in a fit state to face the Philistine giant. We know the names of some other members of Saul's army - David's brothers, Eliab, Aminadab and Shamar and they are not spiritually ready to face Goliath either. Eliab's problem is pride and jealousy which makes him unfit for God's service.

It is possible that the Philistines were well informed about Israel's lack of readiness to fight. They might have been given intelligence that Samuel has informed Saul that God has rejected him as king. They might be equally aware of the King's moods of melancholy and violence. It seems too much a coincidence that they choose this particular time to make their all-out attack on Israel. The enemy always attacks us when we are at our weakest - sometimes this weakness may be due to elation at spiritual victories as well as despair at our low spiritual condition.

Israel's sad condition is highlighted in verse 11 of chapter 17.

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. [1 Samuel 17:11 ESV]

Goliath has just made his very public rant to infuriate and intimidate the ranks of the Israelite army. *"I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together."* [1 Samuel 17:10 ESV] Goliath had made this pronouncement twice a day for 40 days. Sadly, there was no one able to take up the challenge.

Is this a picture of the spiritual state of our nation or of our church in the 21st Century? Are we under the attack of the enemy and totally powerless to defend the truth? God is still looking for a modern day David to take up the challenge. By the way, this 21st Century David may not be a male. We have observed that God uses women to fulfil his purposes when men are lacking in vision, strength and courage. However, we, as Christians, are engaged in a spiritual battle every day of our lives. Paul's letter to the Ephesians instructs us to 'put on the whole armour of God.' (See Ephesians 6:10-17) This passage reminds us that our principal enemy is not human - as Christians we are engaged in a spiritual battle against the devil and the forces of evil. We are well armed not like Goliath - our armour is invisible but it is very necessary - the belt of truth; the breastplate of righteousness; our shoes are our readiness given by the gospel of peace; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

[See Ephesians 6:10-17]

David: God's Man for the Crisis 12/03/2021

Read 1 Samuel Chapter 17

We saw in the last Day Share that Goliath's challenge had produced fear in the heart of Saul and there was no warrior able to take up the challenge. We identified that the problem was not due to the lack of weaponry or the inadequacy of their armour. The problem was spiritual. The nation of Israel had turned its back on God and its king had disobeyed God. It is against such a background that David makes his mark on the history of the nation of Israel. He is God's man for this crisis.

David had experienced God's hand while looking after his sheep and he had learned to trust God in every situation. The key verse on chapter 17 of 1st Samuel is:

That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand. [1 Samuel 17: 46c- 47 ESV]

David was only a young lad but he appreciated that Yahweh was powerful and that the only way Goliath could be defeated was through God's miraculous intervention.

The battle is the LORD'S. This is the key to this whole chapter. It is the key to all our situations and problems today. We struggle to fight against the devil in our own strength and suffer defeat and humiliation. We try to serve the Lord using our gifts of worldly wisdom instead of relying entirely on the Jehovah - the Lord God. David seems to have been the only one who appreciated this truth.

Saul totally misunderstood the situation. He could not see how David would be able to fight against the Philistine. "You are not able to go against this Philistine and defeat him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." Humanly speaking, Saul was right. It was humanly impossible for a young inexperienced warrior to take on such a man of war. Saul did not mention the disparity in size but he tried to deal with the other obvious difference - David was unarmed and unprotected while Goliath was showing off his superior armour. Saul offered David his own armour and his own sword but David correctly refused. He had never tested them out. He had, however, experience of using God's invisible armour. He had used a sling before too in God's service and he knew that he could trust God to direct the stone to its target. He had been able to slaughter a lion which was attacking his flock and he was talking from experience. He had been able to kill a bear who was about to steal his lambs from the ewes.

Saul reluctantly agrees to allow David to fight the Philistine giant. And David descends into the valley to encounter a new challenge. In the last Day Share we referred to Goliath's stature and his armour and weapons. He had a shield bearer because his shield is too large for him to use on his own. And yet Goliath thinks it necessary to intimidate David further by resorting to verbal abuse and threats. He cursed David by his gods - probably the Philistine god, Dagon. He suggested that David was imagining that he was trying to fight a dog with a stick. This was probably referring to the fact that David had a shepherd's staff in his hand. In fact, David was not going to use the staff as a weapon but Goliath did not realise that. He is mocking David's lack of weapons. He might not have noticed the sling. This is typical of such a bully. He cannot imagine how David could possibly be any match for him. He is invincible - even by the most experienced of Israel's soldiers. This young inexperienced shepherd boy is just an insult. In his arrogance, Goliath threatens David with a horrible death. "I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." You will not even be given a proper burial - your dismembered body will become carrion for the birds and food for the wild animals.

I love David's speech to Goliath - I think it deserves to be quoted in full.

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand." [1 Samuel 17: 45-47 ESV]

I am not sure why David took 5 stones when he only needed one. I have heard many suggestions and explanations. Someone suggested that Goliath was one of a family of five giants and that David was expecting to take on the other four. What I do know is that it was the Lord who directed the stone to hit its target. Slings were known as weapons in Egypt from as far back as 2,000 BC. There are carvings from Nineveh showing this form of fighting. In Judges 20 we read of some of the tribe of Benjamin who were skilled in using a sling and a stone - every one of the 700 could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. [Judges 20:16] It is not David's skill with a sling that is the key ingredient in this unequal battle - although God used his skill. The lesson is that the battle is the Lord's. He will always win the battle. We are on the victory side.

I have just selected a book from my shelves above my desk. The book is by Max Lucado and he is a much better writer than I am. The title of this book is **Facing Your Giants**. Here is the blurb from the back cover of this book.

You know your Goliath. You recognise his walk, the thunder of his voice.

He taunts you with bills you can't pay, people you can't please, habits you can't break, failures you can't forget, and a future you can't face. But just like David, you can face your giant, even if you aren't the strongest, the smartest, the best equipped, or the holiest.

David. You could read his story and wonder what God saw in him. His life has little to offer the unstained, straight A saint. He fell as often as he stood, stumbled as often as he conquered. But for those who know the sound of a Goliath, David gives this reminder

FOCUS ON GIANTS - YOU STUMBLE

FOCUS ON GOD - YOUR GIANTS TUMBLE

David: New-found Celebrity Status 14/03/2021

In our world today, we often hear of ordinary young people who suddenly become famous. I remember a young girl from Rothesay by the name of Lena Zavaroni. She was a Scottish singer and a television show host. At ten years of age, with her album - *Ma! He's making eyes at me*, she was the youngest person in history to have an album in the top ten of the UK Albums Chart. Later she starred in her own television series, made numerous TV guest star appearances and appeared on stage. Sadly, from the age of 13, this young girl suffered from anorexia nervosa and also developed clinical depression when she was 15. Following an operation to cure her depression, Lena Zavaroni died at age 35 from pneumonia in 1999. [Source - Wikipedia] This is a tragic story and is an extreme example of the effects of sudden elevation to stardom.



Like Zena, David was catapulted to fame (if you pardon the pun). One day, he was the youngest in a very ordinary family and it was his responsibility to look after the sheep and to take food to his older brothers. He had been anointed by Samuel as the next king and he had served King Saul as a court musician for a short time. But he was unknown - a nonentity. And then the great victory over Goliath hit the headlines and suddenly David's name is on everyone's lips. David is even the subject of a pop song which was sung by women in the streets. The chorus went like this, "Saul has struck down his thousands, but David his ten thousands." [1 Samuel 18:7 ESV]

As they returned home, after David had killed the Philistine, the women poured out of all the villages of Israel singing and dancing, welcoming King Saul with tambourines, festive songs, and lutes. In playful frolic the women sang, Saul kills by the thousand, David by the ten thousand! This made Saul angry—very angry. He took it as a personal insult. He said, "They credit David with 'ten thousands' and me with only 'thousands.' Before you know it they'll be giving him the kingdom!" From that moment on, Saul kept his eye on David.

1 Samuel 18:6-9 MSG

<https://bible.com/bible/97/1sa.18.6-9.MSG>

This was a BIG challenge for young David as much as facing the well-armed three-metre tall Philistine. It is so easy to let praise go to your head. It is hard to keep humble when people are singing songs about you. Remember that David is perhaps only a teenager, I reckon. During my spell in secondary schools, I came across many lads about the same age as David with inflated egos because they thought they were going to make it big in football. They had been signed up for a football team - an S Form. We had to widen the classroom doors to let them access the school - their heads were puffed up with pride and arrogance! Not so with David. 'He kept the head' - as we say in Ayrshire. Flattery is very harmful to us - but we secretly love it and relish it. A. W. Pink provides a personal insight into his 12 years as a pastor when he retreated to the vestry as soon as the service was over to avoid people congratulating him on a powerful sermon.

Pink is very critical of the age of hero worship in Christian circles - this quotation is relevant to the 21st century as it was when he wrote this:

"We are living in an age of hero worship, and Christendom itself is infected by this evil spirit. Man is eulogised (praised) and magnified on every hand, not only out in the world, but even in the so-called churches, Bible conferences, and religious periodicals - seen in the advertising of the speakers, the printing of their photos, and the toadying to them. O how little hiding behind the Cross, how little self-effacement there is today." Cease ye

from man (Isaiah 2:22) needs to be placed in large letters over the platforms of all the big religious gatherings in this man-deifying age." [A.W. Pink: Life of David]

The women were wrong to give David the credit for this victory. It was really the Lord who had won the battle of Elah. He had used this unknown shepherd boy to defeat Goliath so that the glory would go to God and not to men. In an earlier Day Share [Miriam the prophetess 29/0172021] we observed that Moses' sister recognised that it was God who had made it possible for them to cross the Red Sea.

"I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. [Exodus 15:2 ESV]

Here the Israelite women are claiming the victory for Saul and David - but they are saying that it was more due to David than Saul. We will spend another Day Share looking at Saul's jealous reaction to this. For today, we take David as an example to follow in his humility and wise conduct when he was the object of flattery and adulation. This is particularly relevant to anyone who has a public role in the church - we must make sure that Jesus is given the first place in our worship and our service. As a young boy in Sunday School, I sang the chorus which spelled out the secret of JOY

Jesus First

Yourself Last and

Others in between.

David: Victim of Insane Jealousy 16/03/2021

Saul was not always jealous of David. When David was employed as music therapist to play the harp or the lyre to calm Saul's bad temper, the Bible records that David had found favour in his sight. In other words, he liked having him around - for purely selfish reasons because his music calmed him down. Although David had been anointed as the next king, there is no record of any negative reaction to him from the reigning monarch. Even when this young lad turned up at the Valley of Elah and was asking awkward questions and then decided to take on Goliath, Saul was not angry with him. It is unclear why Saul agreed to allow David to fight Goliath. Perhaps, Saul argued that he had nothing to lose and that this youth was expendable. He perhaps reasoned that if David was defeated, there would still be another chance to defeat the Philistines.

There is an intriguing passage at the end of chapter 17 when Saul is discussing with Abner about David's father and neither Saul nor Abner seem to know anything about David even though Saul had employed him in his household as his musician. After David's victory in the battle of Elah, Saul decides to keep David at the palace and will not let him return to his father's house. Jonathan is very impressed with David but Saul never thanks David for his bravery even though he had solved a huge problem for the king - humanly speaking. Saul is neutral about David until he hears what the women are chanting. This causes him to lose the plot. He now sees David as a real threat to his throne.

It is interesting to contrast Saul's attitude with that of Jonathan. At the beginning of chapter 18, we have the beginning of a wonderful friendship between David and Jonathan that is entirely unexpected. But Saul's jealousy takes root at the same time as his son's admiration and affection for the same man, David. Saul's insane jealousy will grow in intensity and will affect his judgement.

And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul eyed David from that day on.

The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David evaded him twice. [1 Samuel 18:8-11 ESV]

I am struck by the sentence - "And Saul **eyed** David from that day on." Here is the same verse in the NIV translation. "And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David." This Hebrew word is unique in the Bible - there are plenty of references to 'eyes' in the Bible but this is the only verse where eye is used as a verb. Saul was watching David in a jealous way. I have to be honest - there have been times when I have been affected by jealousy and envy. Jealousy is a horrible sin which spreads like a cancer and needs to be dealt with ruthlessly. That first look of envy at this young man David who was receiving more praise than he was, was the start of a downward process in Saul. This jealousy provoked Saul to make a serious attempt to murder David. The rest of the book of 1st Samuel is a description of Saul's attempts to get rid of David and he becomes more and more desperate in his desire to eliminate David.

Janie and I have been reading from Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life and today's readings were on the subject of temptation. If we are prone to jealous thoughts, we must make every effort to resist this temptation to eye someone - a brother or sister in our church - with suspicion and jealousy. It means that we interpret every look they give in a wrong way and that we misinterpret their every action and every word. There is no evidence that David encouraged the women to elevate him above the king and there is no evidence that David was deliberately seeking popularity.

Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. So Saul removed him from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people. And David had success in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him. And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them. [1 Samuel 18: 12-16 ESV]

Saul was not interested in the glory that David was giving to the Lord by his careful living and the good relationship he is building up with the Israelites. Saul did not care that people were benefitting from David's good conduct. Jealousy makes us very selfish - it is all about Saul and his feelings.

Jealousy is a sin which we observe in other people easily but we often fail to notice it in our own hearts. Paul speaks about Christian love in his first letter to the Corinthians.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 ESV]

Love does not envy. How can we be jealous or envious of someone whom we love with agape love? Notice that the other features of Christian love reinforce this. If we love someone, instead of being jealous and bitter about them, we will be patient and kind. If we love someone with genuine Christian love, we will not be selfish - their welfare will be as important to us as our own. Notice love believes all things - this is the opposite of the cynical eyeing up of every action, word or even look of the victim of our envy. We will go out of our way to believe the best about other people rather than the worst.

If we have any doubts about the deadly effects of jealousy, they will be removed as we read the story of Saul's conduct against David in the remaining chapters of First Samuel. Jealousy is bad for our health - spiritually, emotionally and physically.

David: God's Providence 18/03/2021

We can see that God was in control of the complex variety of circumstances in David's early life. As Christians, we believe in a God who is all-powerful and all-knowing. We believe that God directs our paths and we reject the notion of chance or coincidence. It is helpful to think about how God was directing David's paths leading him to become the king of Israel. So David was being prepared for his royal duties and God was teaching him vital lessons in the school of faith and obedience. David is described as a man after God's own heart' (1 Samuel 13:14) This does not mean that David was perfect - he had many weaknesses but he was committed to God and was prepared to allow God to direct his paths.

It was not a mistake that David spent his boyhood looking after the sheep. There in the solitude of the fields, he had direct dealings with God and he came to trust in the Lord at specific crisis points - when wild animals were attacking his sheep. The choice of Jesse's family of eight boys was all according to God's plan. David was the youngest and Samuel was guided not to choose any other son regardless of their appearance or stature. David spent some months probably in Saul's palace and this was arranged by our God to provide the young lad with training in the ways of the royal court. [See Day Share entitled David: Music Therapy for Angry King 08/03/2021] The decision to send David to the Valley of Elah was no accident either. There were only three of Jesse's sons fighting the Philistines so there were five boys who could all have been asked to make the journey. It was in the over-ruling of Jehovah that David would make this journey and that he would arrive just as Goliath was making his threats and presenting the challenge to the cowardly ranks of the Israelite army. God was directing things that enabled Saul to hear about a young lad who was eager to face Goliath and God worked in Saul's mind to convince him to allow David to descend to the valley to encounter the well-armed giant. The oft-recounted story is clear evidence of God's direction - using the skills he had taught this shepherd boy, the stone from his sling was effective in killing the giant with just one shot. [See Day Share entitled David: God's Man for the Crisis 12/03/2021]

What happened thereafter was also in God's perfect plan. Jonathan's response to David was according to God's plan for David would need an ally in the enemy's household. Saul would become intensely jealous of David and would seek to harm him. God had so arranged things that Saul's own son would be the one who would protect and defend David - even though David could be seen as a personal threat to him.

I have not referred to the reaction of the Israelite women to the victory against the Philistines and their songs giving more credit to young David than to Saul. We saw in the last Day Share [David: Victim of Insane Jealousy 16/03/2021] that this was what sowed the seeds of jealousy in Saul's mind and this seed grew into a deadly poisonous tree. Surely, this was not also part of God's plan for David. The women should have been more discreet and they should have been less inclined to celebrity worship. If they had recognised that it was the Lord who gave the victory in the Valley of Elah and that David was simply God's instrument, there might not have been these provocative songs that stirred up such a reaction in Saul's heart. However, we believe that everything is allowed to happen according to God's will. So these women were allowed to chant their songs and God allowed Saul to feel deep resentment and jealousy. It would be so harmful to David and would mean him having to go into hiding in caves. Yes, the bad things were all part of God's providence.

I am not sure that David saw it that way at the time. When he was sheltering in a cave instead of being in the palace as the rightful place for God's anointed, he might have felt that this was grossly unfair. I remember feeling very upset when I was passed over for promotion at North Ayrshire Council. I was successful in the first interview for the acting post of Head of Service and I was appointed on an interim basis. I had a very good interview for the actual post itself and then was told that the panel had decided to appoint someone from another Council to the post. I was very hurt and bitterly disappointed and even angry - I am ashamed to say. I now know that I would have not been the right person for the post as it involved making very unpopular and unpleasant decisions. It would be difficult for me to act according to my conscience. I now know that God was directing that

appointment panel of councillors. I am sharing this personal experience to illustrate that it is not only the good things in life that are directed by God.

This pandemic is all part of God plan for the world. One brother debated this with me and suggested that this was the work of the devil. Are we saying that God has lost control of affairs and that evil has triumphed? God allows evil things to happen for our good. Remember the story of Joseph. The brothers were bitter and jealous and sold Joseph as a slave. He ended up wrongly accused and was imprisoned. Out of this injustice, God worked for not only the good of Joseph but for the good of Israel and Egypt. Remember the words of Joseph to his brothers after the death of their father, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

David: A Desperate Dowry 20/03/2021

When Goliath was making his twice-daily challenge to the Israelite army, Saul was keen to find someone to act as champion to take on this giant. So he offered three inducements - 1. great riches 2. marry Saul's daughter 3. family given freedom. I wonder how Saul's daughters felt when they were being advertised as a bribe to persuade men to fight. I am sure they were not consulted about this - another example of women being treated as a commodity. When God killed Goliath using David's sling and skill gained as a shepherd, Saul offered David his eldest daughter, Merab as a wife for him. This never happened. By this time Saul was insanely jealous of David, and he did not want to reward David. He had made a public promise that whoever was prepared to fight the giant would be rewarded with the king's daughter in marriage. Saul made an additional stipulation before he agreed to this - I will give you my daughter as your wife, if and only if you are prepared to 'be valiant for me' and fight the Lord's battles. Saul was scheming already - why should I make myself unpopular by killing this young upstart, why not leave this to the Philistines to kill him in battle. By the way, David used the same tactic as Saul many years later in order to get a wife for himself. David was humble at this stage and he felt too inadequate to be the king's son-in-law. He said to Saul, "I come from an ordinary family - I don't have distinguished relatives or ancestors. How can I marry the daughter of the king." David's humility is commendable and admirable. He did not need to worry because Saul changed his mind and gave Merab to someone else to marry. Saul's word could not be trusted.

However, Saul had another daughter named Michal who loved David. She let her father know that she would not mind marrying David. Saul was pleased with this idea and he told his servants to communicate this with young David. Saul is prepared to be economical with the truth - he wanted to overcome David's apparent reluctance to marry a daughter of the king. So Saul told his servants to lay it on thick - 'the king has delight in you' and 'all his servants love you.' Saul was choking back his jealousy of David as he said this to his servants. But David was still unwilling to proceed with this arranged marriage - he was still protesting that he was a poor man and that he had no reputation. His reputation had grown immensely of course since Goliath collapsed in a heap in the Valley of Elah. Saul's devious mind was working overtime. He thought of a cunning plan. He realised that David's problem was that he could not afford the dowry - or bride price. It was the custom to pay a gift to the parents when they handed over a wife. David was not wealthy enough to afford this payment known as a dowry. Saul suggested a solution. "Here is the dowry I am looking for - and it was pretty gruesome - 100 foreskins of the Philistines." Saul must have been chuckling to himself - this will finish him off. How will he be able to circumcise 100 Philistine men. All Israelite men were circumcised but this was a distinguishing feature of the Israelites. Philistines were uncircumcised and would not willingly agree to this. So he would need to kill an appropriate number of Philistine males in order to get his dowry. David is not put off by this devious suggestion - he hands over 200 foreskins. [I have attached an extract from David: Another Casebook by John Hercus.]

David hands over this disgusting dowry to Saul and so David finally gets his wife, Michal.

Extract from David - Another Case-book by John Hercus 20/03/2021

The human mind can play fascinating tricks.... Why should the thought of Michal suddenly flash into David's mind? Michal, Saul's daughter, his first wife, the girl who fell in love with him after he killed Goliath, as all the girls in the land had done. The Michal he couldn't care less about.

Sure he had Michal. And she would see the procession come up to Jerusalem, and that would teach her something. Because he had earned her. In fact, he had really earned her elder sister Merab, when he had killed Goliath. But he hadn't been interested. He had killed Goliath for better reasons than to get a king's daughter, and Saul could keep Merab so far as he was concerned. And that went for Michal, too. He was only interested in girls he had to go and win, not in girls who came free like the give-away plastic toys stuck in the top of breakfast cereals.

But it was Saul who had come to him and suggested that he should marry Michal. And now David's smile was a huge grin as he remembered how easily he had seen through the whole scheme. That was nearly twenty years ago, and he could still remember it all so vividly. Saul's phoney yarn about how much he would like David to be his son-in-law, how fond of David he had become, blah, blah, blah. And David could see as clear as a pikestaff that it was just some scheme Saul had been cooking up to get rid of him. He remembered how he had played it down to Saul, telling him he was only a humble Israelite, last son in a very humble household, etc., etc.' waiting just to find out what Saul had in mind. And at last it had come out. Why, Saul's family was just over the valley from his own, and it was not many years since Saul himself had been a nobody. But Saul was one of those big straight-shooting men whom he could see clean through and see past and see around a dozen times over as their simple, honest minds were slowly trying to twist things to suit them: And at last Saul had come to the point - Saul had told him what dowry he wanted

And David threw back his head and laughed outright, as he relived that crazy scene. Saul and his dowry! Michal's dowry. That fantastic bit of clumsy manoeuvring by Saul to get rid of his hated, Goliath-killing rival. That dowry. And again he laughed outright as he thought of the dowry. Of how he had knocked off that dowry! Ugh! How he had taken a few trusted men, mates he could rely on to the death, and they bumped of those 200 Philistines! And poor old Saul had been so sure that 100 Philistines would certainly see his death. And he had collected 200. And the look on Saul's face as he had come in with that filthy, disgusting, bloody little bundle. He could never forget that look on Saul's face as he tossed it in front of him. He thought Saul was going to vomit. It was just so plain beastly. But he had made Saul count them all out. Sure, Saul had asked for 100, but there he was with 200. And all handed over to him, one by one, to check and tally. Ugh!

It takes only a matter of a second or two for a fast-thinking mind like David's to relive a scene like that. But even in that second, he could still feel the elation he had felt that day, the elation that alone had stopped him from being sick himself. Ugh again! Of all the messy, sickly things in his life! He had gone out from 'paying' Saul and washed his hands and had a bath and changed his clothes and even washed his hands again. - and yet for weeks he could feel the slimy, sticky filthiness on his fingers. He had washed them and soaped them and put ointments on them, and still he could feel that dowry.

'David, he who has clean hands!'

David leaped to his feet. No voice actually shouting in his ear could have stirred him faster. He looked now at this own hands, feeling again the wretchedness of that long-past day, asking himself, grimly ever so seriously this time:

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

and answering this time in the merest whisper, a whisper in which there was more than just the hint of a half-choked sob, 'David, he who has clean hands...'

He stopped and picked up the tablets again. Those tablets which just a minute before had seemed so fine, so splendid, just so very correct. He knew the words off by heart now; he wasn't reading to learn what he had written, he was reading to learn how true it was. Clean hands. Michal's dowry. Would God call those hands clean?

And the sob this time was unmistakable. As it shook his whole being of young manhood, he just tossed the tablets on to the ground and paced up and down, his mind suddenly in an absolute turmoil.

Clean hands? Then what about a pure heart? Would God see that? If his hands were unclean, was his heart impure? God sees so much, God sees everything. Then what about his heart?

[This is an extract from a book I have had in my shelves for many years. I probably bought it as a student when I visited Pickering and Inglis in Bothwell Street Glasgow when I was a student. It was after decimalisation because the Paperback book cost a handsome 35p. It is now out of print and hard to obtain.

Hercus is an Australian doctor and it is from a medical doctor's perspective. He is speculating and interpreting the facts of David's life in the light of his experience with a multitude of patients. In this extract he imagines David reminiscing as he is writing the 24th Psalm. His memory of this incident of obtaining 200 foreskins to be able to marry a woman whom he did not love. This was the first time we see David committing a gratuitous violent act. I am guessing that the Philistines were killed prior to being circumcised. Here he is slaughtering 200 men just to defy Saul and make a point. According to Hercus, David must have had bitter memories of so many incidents in his life and felt ashamed. This shame and embarrassment is out of step with the lofty tone of the Psalm he is writing.

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

who does not lift up his soul to what is false

and does not swear deceitfully. [Psalm 24: 3 and 4 ESV]

I had a brief look at this Psalm in a previous Day Share - The Lord owns the Earth 22/06/2020. [See PDF on the Psalms]

I often feel the challenge of the content of Day Shares I have written and I am caused to doubt if I have the right to study such subjects. Satan is always good at reminding me of incidents from the past which I try to blot out of my memory. My past is different from David's but Satan is an expert at making us doubt whether we have the spiritual qualities to share God's Word. I am reminded, however, that the blood of Jesus cleanses from every sin. The principles of this Psalm apply to us today - God expects us to live clean lives and to have pure hearts - but this is the work of grace in the life of a sinner. The next verse of the Psalm is instructive -

He will receive blessing from the LORD

and righteousness from the God of his salvation. [Psalm 24:5 ESV]

Notice the Psalm speaks of receiving blessings from the Lord and our righteousness is not our natural state. It is a gift from the God of his salvation.

When Satan tempts me to despair

And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see him there
Who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free;
And God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.,
To look on Him and pardon me.

David: Unexpected Help 22/03/2021

I don't know if your experience has been like mine. In a crisis, I have often found that the people I expected to be on my side were surprisingly nowhere to be seen, but conversely I have found support from some individuals whom I would never have expected to be there for me. This was the situation with David. No mention of help from his father or brothers. But when he was facing the wrath of King Saul, he was helped by two of Saul's own family. God has a sense of humour - he chooses the most unlikely people to work for him. It is remarkable that David was supported by two members of Saul's family. Come to think of it, Moses was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter despite the edict from her father to kill all Hebrew boys.

I have already mentioned about Jonathan, the heir to the throne by natural means. He turned out to be a very loyal friend to David. He helped David out of many a tight spot despite the fact that he was risking the anger of a father with a very short fuse. Even more surprising is the fact that David was a real threat to Jonathan's advancement. If David was successful, then Jonathan could say goodbye to the throne of Israel. But Jonathan loved David and would not let his personal advancement or mad father get in the way of helping his friend. At the beginning of chapter 18, we have the beginning of a wonderful friendship that is entirely unexpected. *As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* [1 Samuel 18:1 ESV] I like the reference to knitting - not that I am an expert in that subject. I had a mother who loved to knit and three sisters who were all able to knit and Janie spends much time in lockdown knitting woolly bonnets for homeless persons. I used to recite as a wee lad - "Knit one, purl one, knit two tog." That is my sum total of expertise in knitting but it is amazing to see that a ball of wool is transformed into a beautiful garment. There was a transformation happened that day in the palace - Jonathan was watching David speaking to Saul and he developed a deep, lasting affection and admiration for him. Please do not allow our modern cynical world to debase this relationship into something sexual and inappropriate. Jonathan was being illogical and selfless. Jonathan was the heir to the throne and yet he loved David even though David was going to be Israel's next king instead of him. "Love is not selfish," we read in 1 Corinthians 13:5. Jonathan is a good example of taking the lowly place in favour of another. Jonathan had relied on the Lord previously and had won a victory over the Philistines at Michmash (1st Samuel Chapter 14) but he recognised God's hand in David's victory. It is good when we can see God working through another Christian and not feel any resentment or jealousy. Jonathan did not feel that his victory against the Philistines had been overshadowed by the defeat of Goliath.

But David got help from another of Saul's offspring - his daughter Michal. Saul has tried several times to assassinate David - usually by throwing a javelin at him from close range. Saul decides to ambush David when he is in the house with his new wife. He sends messengers to keep watch outside the house and they were instructed to kill him in the morning. Michal is aware of her father's plans and she makes a deliberate decision to go against her father and rescue her husband from her father's clutches. She tells David that his life is in danger and she assists David to escape from the house by lowering him down from the window and then he fled away and escaped. She used a puppet to replace her husband in the bed with a pillow of goats hair at its head and covered this with the bed clothes. When the messengers arrived, she simply told them that David was too ill to be seen. This did not satisfy Saul who insisted that the messengers brought David to him in his bed. They discover the image with the pillow of goat's hair is in the bed instead of David. Saul was angry with Michal and said to her "Why have you deceived me in this way and let my enemy escape from me." But Michal is not brave enough to challenge her father's schemes or his unfair description of David. She lies to her father and says that David had forced her to rescue him. However, she had preserved David's life that night.

God used Saul's son and daughter to keep David alive. God can do anything. He can use anyone to accomplish his will. He used Pharaoh's daughter to protect Moses from her father's cruel edict and Moses was brought up in the palace - despite Pharaoh's wish to exterminate the Israelites. In the same way, God used both Jonathan and Michal to preserve David when their jealous father had decided to end his life. He used a heathen godless king of Persia by the name of Cyrus to rescue His people from exile in Babylon. How often we divide politicians into two camps - broadly speaking goodies and baddies and we pray that God will put the goodies into power instead of the baddies. He can and does use even those who deny him to accomplish His plans. Michal was not a particularly nice person - but God used her to preserve His servant, David.

David: Jonathan Intervenes 24/03/2021

Read 1 Samuel 19:1-7

The background to this incident is that David is becoming more successful and more popular with the people and this makes Saul more and more jealous of him and even afraid of him. *Then the commanders of the Philistines came out to battle, and as often as they came out David had more success than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was highly esteemed.* [1 Samuel 18:30 ESV]

The Philistines have lost their champion, but they have not been defeated. They keep on attacking Israel and sometimes Saul sends some of his servants - officers in his army to defend Israel against the attacks of the Philistines. Other times it is David who is in charge of stopping the attacks of the Philistines. It is obvious that David is more successful than Saul's officers and commanders. We are not told whether David was acting on his own initiative or whether he is following Saul's orders. These statistics are very worrying to Saul. He knows that Michal, his daughter loves David and he has allowed her to marry him. Saul knows that the Lord is helping David. His ruse with the bride-price or dowry of 100 Philistine foreskins was intended to provoke the anger of the Philistines and direct it against David. The Philistines were opposed to circumcision. It was only Israel who circumcised their boys in early childhood. So David had been used to shame the Philistines but their revenge and hatred of Israel as a nation did not lead to David's death as Saul had hoped nor did it reduce David's popularity with the Israelite people.

What Saul did next shows that he is becoming desperate. He has tried to kill David with a javelin and he will later on get his soldiers to attack the house with the newly-weds - David and Michal and arrest David. Of course, we know that Michal helped David to escape from her father's evil plans. But that comes later.

In this passage, we have another piece of evidence of God's sovereign rule over the life of David. It is strange that Saul decides to confide in Jonathan, his son. After all, Jonathan was open in his declaration of admiration and affection for David. After the battle Jonathan developed a real lasting bond with David. Saul rebuked Jonathan for his misguided loyalty and pointed out the reality of the threat David was posing to the continuation of the house of Saul. After all, Jonathan was the natural heir to the throne and should have been anticipating taking over on the death of his father. So for him to support his rival, he is renouncing his claim to be Israel's next king.

But Chapter 19 begins with this verse

And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David.

1 Samuel 19:1 ESV

<https://bible.com/bible/59/1sa.19.1.ESV>

Is this evidence that Saul is getting desperate? Is he putting Jonathan to the test? Is he wanting to prove where Jonathan's loyalty really lay? If this is a test of loyalty, Jonathan has no hesitation in declaring his loyalty to David. He warns David of the plot to kill him and tells David to be on his guard. He suggests a plan of action to keep David safe. Jonathan is going to act as intermediary in the dispute between his father and his friend. He is prepared to risk Saul's anger and unpredictable behaviour by speaking to his father on David's behalf. Jonathan is using his relationship with his father to benefit David. He is hoping to end the hostility and to bring David back into Saul's trust. He is appealing to Saul's reasonableness. He is making a logical argument to convince Saul that David poses no threat to him.

Now there is an obvious problem here. Saul is not showing much evidence of clear thinking and a rational level-headed brain. Saul is using the amygdala part of his brain rather than his neo-cortex. The amygdala is the part of the brain where we act on impulse. It is the 'fight or flight' part of the brain - a basic instinct for survival. I used to see young people losing it and thrashing out or running away. They were not thinking the situation out with the part of the brain that we use to weigh up matters rationally and calmly. So Jonathan wants his impulsive and unpredictable dad to stop and weigh up the situation.

David is close enough to hear what Jonathan is saying. So Jonathan makes a powerful argument to the angry, jealous King.

- David is not a threat to you.
- He has risked his life against the Philistines.
- He has proved he can be trusted.
- His actions have not only benefited the nation - you personally have gained from his actions.

Jonathan is making a very valid point. If David had not stepped forward and taken on Goliath, Israel would have been humiliated and defeated by the Philistines. Saul should have been the one to act as champion and he had failed due to fear. He should be grateful for David's courage. In fact, it is due to David that Saul is still alive and still king of Israel.

The outcome of this intervention is surprising. Saul accepts what Jonathan has been saying and he calls off the death-threat to David. He allows David back to the Palace. This is a temporary reprieve. It is a short period of respite.

It is wonderful that God uses Saul's son to preserve David's life. He is sovereign. He can use the most unlikely people to do his will. Often when I pray, I suggest to God how to act. I present the problem from my perspective and then state what I want God to do. Sometimes he answers prayer but not the way I expected.

A.W. Pink makes a comparison with our Lord Jesus who intercedes for us in heaven with His Father. He compares Jonathan interceding with his father on behalf of David to our Lord interceding with the Father on our behalf. However, when Jesus represents us to the Father, he does not refer to our character to make his case on our behalf. Jonathan is claiming that David can be trusted. He is appealing to Saul to observe the evidence of David's good character. But when Jesus makes intercession for us before God, he appeals on the basis of a perfect sacrifice at the cross of Calvary. His intercession is permanent and lasting.

Extract from A.W. Pink: The Life of David Chapter 7 - Jonathan's intervention 24/03/2021

Saul was growing desperate, and now hesitated not to make known unto his own son his fierce hatred of David. Yet here again we may behold and admire the directing hand of Providence, in the king's not concealing his murderous designs from Jonathan. The son shared not his father's enmity, accordingly we read,

"But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee" (1 Samuel 9: 2, 3).

It is blessed to see such true and disinterested friendship, for it should not be forgotten that Jonathan was the natural heir to the throne. Here we see him faithfully acquainting David of his danger, and counselling him to take precautionary measures against it.

Not only did Jonathan warn his beloved friend of the evil intentions of his father, but he also entreated the king on his behalf. Beautiful it is to see him interceding before Saul (vv. 4, 5), at the imminent risk of bringing down his anger upon his own head. Jonathan reminded Saul that David had never wronged him; so far from it, he had delivered Israel from the Philistines, and had thus saved the king's throne; why then should he be so set upon shedding "innocent blood"? Jonathan must not here be regarded as a type of Christ, rather is he a vivid contrast. Jonathan's plea was based upon David's personal merits. It is the very opposite in the case of the Christian's Intercessor. Our great High Priest appears before the King of the universe on behalf of His people not on the ground of any good they have done, but solely on the ground of that perfect satisfaction or obedience which He offered to divine justice on their behalf; no merits of theirs can He plead, but His own perfect sacrifice prevails for them.

Jonathan's intercession was successful: "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan" (v. 6). He not only gave his son a fair hearing, but was duly impressed by the arguments used, and was convicted for the present that he was wrong in seeking the life of David. Yet here again the intercession of Jonathan and that of the Lord Jesus for His people are in striking contrast: the former had naught but a temporary and transient effect upon his father, whereas that of our Advocate is eternally efficacious— forever be His name praised. "And Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain" (v. 6). Once more we see how easy it is for wicked men to make use of pious expressions, and appear to superficial observers godly men. The sequel shows of what little value is the solemn oath of a king, and warns us to place no confidence in the engagements of earthly rulers. They who are acquainted with the Scriptures are not surprised when even national and international treaties become only worthless "scraps of paper."

Pink, Arthur W.. Arthur W. Pink Collection (43 Volumes) (Kindle Locations 198648-198656). E4 Group. Kindle Edition.

David: Another Near Miss 26/03/2021

Read Chapter 19 of First Samuel (verses 1 - 17)

In the last Day Share we saw that Jonathan had spoken to Saul, his father on David's behalf to persuade him not to treat David as his enemy. It appears that Jonathan's intervention on behalf of his friend was successful and David was able to return to the king's court as he had done before. This shows some remarkable grace on the part of David. It could not have been easy to forget about Saul's attempts to kill him. He had every reason to distrust Saul - in fact, it was clear that Saul could not be trusted. He had repeatedly tried to throw a javelin at him. He had tried unsuccessfully to get David killed by the Philistines - even suggesting a ridiculous dowry to entice David to attack the uncircumcised Philistines. Saul had used his servants and even went as far as instructing his son, Jonathan to execute his newfound friend.

David was humble enough to go back to being a servant to a man who had no moral right to rule the nation of Israel. He trusted in God enough to put aside his own fears and trust in God to protect him as he made his way back to the palace where he had almost been killed by the king's jealous rage. Saul's change of heart did not last long. He was not able to continue to listen to the rational thought processes of his brain - rehearsing the arguments advanced by Jonathan. He found it hard to bury the envy that caused him to act on violent impulse. Saul is a picture of a man who is governed by the sinful nature which the Bible calls the flesh. I remember working as a student in the local parks department and one of my workmates had been a professional footballer. Sadly, he had developed an addiction to alcohol and this transformed a very likeable, jovial man into a monster. One day he confided with me that he had attacked his wife the night before while he was under the influence of drink. He was distraught and remorseful. He knew that he had almost killed her in his drunken rage. He told me that he was never going to touch drink again. That conversation would have taken place around 9 am and after lunchtime he returned to the squad with a distinct smell of alcohol on his breath. Sadly, he never was able to give up his addiction to alcohol and it ruined his life. Saul's addiction was to jealousy - not alcohol. It was just as deadly and powerful.

It all began to go wrong when war broke out again between the Israelites and the Philistines. David resumed his

military activities and was very successful again. This is what Saul just cannot handle - he is so jealous of David that he hates when things go well for him. He has not learned anything from Jonathan's wise advice. Surely he can see that David is good news for Israel - he has been the scourge of the Philistines all beginning with his successful attack on Goliath. Here he is striking another blow against the Philistine menace. Let's pause a moment or two and reflect on the implications of this for us in our day. This is an imaginary situation but I suggest it is not too far-fetched. We have two Christians in the same church. Both are about the same age and were good friends at one time until A struck up a friendship with a girl from a neighbouring church. This was a blow to B who would have liked to start dating that same girl. B becomes very jealous of A and this jealousy affects their previous close relationship. Both A and B play an active part in the church youth work. Both of them are youth group leaders. However, one young lad, who is a member of A's group, is from a deprived background becomes very interested in the Gospel. He asks many questions and one evening A leads this young lad to the Lord. He becomes a Christian and is on fire for the Lord. Before long he is bringing many of his mates to church and they are showing an interest. B finds all of this hard to deal with. His jealousy prevents him from rejoicing along with the angels in heaven that this young man's life has been turned around. The young man asks for baptism and this is too much for B. His jealousy has affected his judgement and his spiritual life. He cannot bring himself to attend the baptismal ceremony - and makes a feeble excuse to skip church that evening..... And you can finish this story for yourself. It all began with jealousy. Before long, B's spiritual life was in ruins.

Back to 1,000 BC and the life of David. Saul is sitting eyeing David as he is playing the harp or the lyre. He used to love hearing that sound - the music of the harp helped to soothe his bad temper and to lift him out of the melancholy and depression. But not so this time. There is a javelin just near him..... and he uses it again. Once more Saul tries to pin David to the wall with his spear. David jumped out of the way and the spear missed its target. And so David flees to his home with Saul's daughter, Michal. I have already described in a previous Day Share how Saul tried to arrest and kill David and Michal deceived her father and helped David to escape from the servants of Saul who had been watching the house during the night. [David: Unexpected Help 22/03/2021]

In the early verses of chapter 19, Saul had made a promise or an oath before the Lord. He had promised that he would not take any steps to put David to death. I am not sure what gap there was in time between this promise made in verse 6 of chapter 19 and Saul's unsuccessful and clumsy attempt to pin David to the wall with his spear in verse 10. It is hard to be precise with dates and times but I suggest that it might have been only a few weeks or maybe a couple of months since Saul had stated that he would not attack David again. Saul was out of control - he was in the grip of a harmful spirit from the Lord and he could not control his temper.

I used to spend a considerable proportion of my week dealing with young people who had, in the psychological jargon, anger management issues. One boy threw a chair through a window in his classroom. Another girl attacked a teacher in a rage and the teacher was injured so badly that she was never able to work again. I could go on with memories of some of the young people I interviewed after serious incidents in school. Losing their temper was a common occurrence for many young people with dire consequences. Before leaving this incident in the life of David, I want to make some points for our benefit today. It is not just teenagers who have anger management issues! Sometimes adults lose control and act on a violent impulse. Sadly, some Christians have destroyed their reputation by such conduct. As I look within myself, I have to admit that the seeds are in my heart. I tend to be very placid but some things provoke me and I can become irritable and bad-tempered. Saul was unable to control his behaviour. His jealousy was ruining him. It is the Holy Spirit who provides the power to allow us to exercise self-control. It is just around a year since we looked at the subject of the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5 and the Day Share for 22nd March 2020 was entitled 'Fruit of the Spirit- Self-control'. Here is the prayer which ended that Day Share

Prayer

O Holy Spirit, I am aware of the weakness in my old nature and I need your strength to give me the power to live a holy life. I want to live a life that is like Jesus and is well-pleasing to God the Father. I need your power every day and every hour of the day. Without your strength I will give in to my old sinful nature. Please strengthen me today.

Amen

David: Advice from a Prophet 28/03/2021

Read 1st Samuel 19:18 - 24

When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. [1 Samuel 19:18 NIV]

David needs good advice and support. He is in a desperate situation. He has fled from Saul and has sought out the old prophet Samuel. He realises that Saul is out to kill him and it was Michal who rescued him from her father's clutches. Saul wanted to kill David and humanly speaking he nearly succeeded. Of course, there was an unseen hand preserving David wherever he went and all Saul's expertise with a spear were irrelevant because God was protecting his anointed king. It was God's will that David would ascend the throne of Israel. But David has had to run away from Saul's palace after another attempt on his life.

So David runs to the prophet who had anointed him. Samuel was God's representative in Israel and David would never forget Samuel's visit to his home in Bethlehem. He had not been present in the home when Samuel arrived and started his search for a replacement for Saul. While Samuel was checking out David's older brothers to find

the one whom God had chosen to be the next king, David was out on the hillside looking after his sheep. It was only after some prompting from Samuel, that Jesse remembered this younger son and sent to fetch him to meet with the prophet. But Samuel had been instructed that David was God's choice and David was subsequently anointed. He was not made king immediately and Saul continued to rule Israel. Even after Saul is unable to take on Goliath, the gigantic champion of the Philistines, Saul continues to hold on to his throne. This is despite David's growing popularity and success in fighting against Israel's enemy.

David's popularity and success had made Saul see David as his rival and even his enemy and he had attacked him with a spear on several occasions. He had tried to enrol his son, Jonathan as David's assassin but that did not work. He then ordered servants to arrest David while he is at home with his new wife, Saul's daughter. Michal, the daughter of Saul helps David to escape from the soldiers who have surrounded the house.

So David sees the writing on the wall. In despair, he seeks refuge at a place called Ramah. He tells Samuel all about his troubles. It is good to have someone trustworthy like Samuel to listen to our woes and troubles. I guess that David has a lot to tell God's prophet. I wonder if Samuel allowed David the opportunity to unburden himself. It is good practice to listen sympathetically when someone whom we know is in a difficult situation. It is a great privilege to be trusted enough for someone to tell you their problems. This takes great sensitivity. It is perhaps better to let them do most of the talking and resist the temptation to interrupt too much. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul talks about helping each other on the Christian pathway.

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2 NIV

<https://galatians.bible/galatians-6-2>

This is exactly what Samuel was doing for David. He was trying to take some of the heavy load off David's back. This is not easy. Sometimes we can make the burden that much heavier instead of lighter. We say the wrong thing and this remark just adds to the burden our friend is carrying. Someone in the church phones you (because we are not able to meet). They go through a long story about their troubles. So you make the comment, "Well, things could be much worse. It's good that it's only the left foot that keeps you up all night. Just think what it would be like if it was both feet!" Probably, that was not what the other person wanted to hear. Or you say to the person on the phone, "You think you've got problems. Have you heard about wee Mrs So-and-so?" And then you think it is a good time to tell your friend about someone who is, in your opinion, even worse off. Not the best option.

It was a relief for David to tell this older man about his troubles. Samuel was sharing the load. A problem shared is a problem halved. By the way, this means that Samuel is carrying some of David's burden as well as his own. Anyone involved in pastoral work will find that they are taking on other people's worries and problems as well as their own. This is exactly what the Lord expects to be happening in a Christian church. Over the years, my wife, Janie has regularly listened to other people and offered support. Sometimes, she then finds it hard to sleep because of the additional load she has in her mind. She has then to hand all these burdens to the Lord.

It is God's plan for the local church to be a place where burdens are shared. Ramah seems to have been like that. Samuel was leading a community of prophets who were under the control of the Holy Spirit. David was experiencing not only the help from a godly man. He was also in a place of blessing where the Holy Spirit was working. This was a sacred place. It would have been good for David to spend longer at Naioth - probably it was some sort of camp. The word 'Naioth' means literally 'dwellings or habitations' and may have been a religious compound of huts or similar buildings. The exact detail of this place does not matter - it is a place where God's presence is present and it is the ideal place for David - especially in this personal crisis he is experiencing.

Sadly, into this place of fellowship and spiritual uplift, comes Saul in all his turmoil of anger and jealousy. Next Day Share focuses on this.

Saul and the Holy Spirit 30/03/2021

If I look up from this screen I can see a book on my shelf. It has this title - Surprised by the Power of the Spirit - by Dr Jack Deere. This writer argues that the Holy Spirit's supernatural gifts did not cease in New Testament times. I am not going to rehearse the contents of this book which I have not read for many years. It is the title which interests me and, in my opinion, is relevant for the passage we are looking at in today's Day Share. I strongly believe that many evangelical Christians are afraid of the power of the Holy Spirit. They are uncomfortable with the thought that someone may have been healed by the power of the Spirit. How do we feel when we see someone who is clearly responding in the power of the Spirit? Do we think it is strange and maybe we even suggest that there is something sinister at work?

In this chapter we read of a strange story where Saul was so jealous of David and determined to assassinate him that he was prepared to send servants to Naioth in Ramah to arrest David and kill him. There was no place sacred as far as Saul was concerned. David may have reckoned that he would be safe with Samuel as there was evidence of God's presence there in such a powerful way. Surely Saul will hesitate to carry out his execution of his rival in such a sacred place. Many years later in the year 1170, the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket was murdered by four knights in Canterbury Cathedral after he had quarrelled with King Henry II of England. These knights did not see anything wrong with committing murder in a church - even a cathedral. It was similar with Saul. A report came to him that his enemy, David was at Naioth in Ramah. So Saul immediately sent his messengers to arrest David but they never carried out this task. Instead, they saw a company of prophets

prophesying under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit and they joined in with them and also began to prophesy too. There are not many details provided in the narrative. What exactly did this prophesying look like? Were the prophets in a trance? Did Saul's messengers try to resist but they found that they could not help but join in this spiritual activity? I suspect that the answer to the last question is 'yes' - I would find it hard to see that these servants of Saul would have chosen to join in with these prophets and not carry out the task Saul had given them. And so these messengers return to Saul empty handed. I can begin to imagine that Saul was very angry at this. I cannot imagine that he just took this news calmly and quietly. So he dispatched another set of messengers with a strong word from the king that they were, in no way to return without this scoundrel or whatever term of abuse Saul had for David. Again, the mission was unsuccessful so Saul sent a third group who also returned having been prophesying with the prophets of Naioth but without the fugitive.

Saul is becoming exasperated and really desperate. And so, he decides to go himself and take matters into his own hands. He arrives at a well called Secu in Ramah and he is informed that he has to travel a bit further to Naioth. So he sets off on the last stage of his journey but he has not reckoned on what happened next. The Bible tells us that the Spirit of God came upon him also - that is a clue as to what happened to all the previous messengers. They did not decide to prophesy on their own initiative. The Spirit of God - or as we would tend to describe Him, the Holy Spirit came upon them. So Saul found himself prophesying as he travelled along the road to Naioth. This must have been a strange sight for anyone who met him. But that was nothing compared to what happened when Saul finally arrived at Naioth. He stripped off his clothes and lay naked all that day and all that night.

What are we to make of this incident? You could write the title of the book I referred to earlier over this incident. Saul must have been 'surprised by the power of the Spirit.' This is the omnipotent God in action - the Holy Spirit is divine - He is one of the Godhead or to use the term which we often use in Christian circles, the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is powerful and he is at work here. There are many questions which you and I might want to ask but one thing is clear - God the Holy Spirit intervened on four occasions to preserve the life of his anointed king. He used a strange approach.

This was not the first time that Saul had been prophesying. Before he became king, Saul had prophesied at another place. Again, the Spirit of God had rushed upon him and he had prophesied at a place called Gibeah. Again, Samuel is present. [1 Samuel 10:10] It seems that there was a saying or more accurately a question which was commonly heard among the Israelites - Is Saul among the prophets? I suggest that these incidents were well known and the one at Naioth must have been the source of some humour among Saul's subjects - you don't expect a king to be naked in public.

This is a big topic and it is impossible to do justice to the work of the Holy Spirit in a few sentences at the end of this Day Share. However, I want to suggest that many of our church services are lacking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our worship can often be stilted and lacking in Holy Spirit's power. We are often distracted by other matters in our worship. We are thinking so much about the week ahead that our worship to God is just a ritual that we are going through. We should pray for the Holy Spirit to move in our churches and to cause us to worship. Our prayers would not just follow a formula with which we have become comfortable if we are praying in the Spirit. Maybe we would be 'surprised by the power of the Spirit' in our churches today.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me;
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me;
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me;

Mission Praise 613

Words and Music © 1935 Birdwing Music / Capitol CMG Publishing, administered in the UK and Eire by Song Solutions (www.songsolutions.org). All rights reserved. Used by permission.

[There is a video of Anne Smith playing this hymn. It is in the Anne Smith Channel on the website]

David: Despair with Jonathan 01/04/2021

Read 1 Samuel Chapter 20

So David has left the retreat of the old prophet Samuel and his school of prophets. He fled from Naioth which was some sort of camp - maybe a camp normally used by shepherds. David is in a panic again because of the arrival of Saul. His messengers had failed to arrest David and bring him to Saul to be killed as so Saul makes the journey himself. The journey for Saul did not go as planned and he ended up lying naked outside overnight. He found it impossible to resist the influence of the Spirit of God. David ignores the fact that God has preserved his life despite Saul's determination to kill him. Jonathan showed genuine affection for David - even though David was his rival for the throne of Israel. I see some good features in Jonathan - he illustrates the kind of love which is spoken about in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 NIV]

Just to pick out some features of the love Jonathan showed to David mentioned in this well-known chapter.

- Love is kind - Jonathan showed kindness towards David many times
- Love does not envy - Jonathan did not envy David's success on the battlefield or his popularity with the people - especially women.
- Love is not proud - Jonathan displays humility - prepared to advance David to his own disadvantage.
- Love is not self-seeking. Jonathan's behaviour is very unselfish and altruistic - he is risking his own relationship with his father, David.
- Love always hopes. Jonathan is optimistic and wants a good outcome for David.

What about the lie that Jonathan tells David in verse 2 this chapter?

Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me?"

"Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn't so!" [1 Samuel 20:1-2 NIV]

I am not seeking to defend lying which is condemned in the Bible. David is in despair and asks two very genuine questions, "Why is your father trying to kill me? What harm have I done to him? I have separated David's words into two related questions. Jonathan does not answer the first question - and in fact, he had asked his father that same question (1 Samuel 19:4-5). He corrects David's suggestion that his father was trying to kill him. My old commentator is very critical of Jonathan for doing this and this is further evidence that Jonathan was not 'a saved man.' I think that Jonathan is very misguided in this remark to David. There is ample evidence that Saul is only too eager to assassinate David. Saul had even tried to recruit his own son, Jonathan to carry out the execution of his rival (1 Samuel 19: 1). Jonathan was trying to protect David from the reality of the situation. He wanted to believe that David was safe even though all the evidence pointed to the contrary. I would say that Jonathan is being very naïve and blinkered. There are times when we find it hard to be honest with friends when they are facing difficult times. There is a temptation to try to hide the truth when the prospect is bleak. We mistakenly try to preserve them from facing the facts.

David is not in a good emotional state. He is very vulnerable. He is obsessed with himself. Read through verse 1 of the chapter and notice how often David spoke about himself -

Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me?" David is not in the same spiritual condition he was in previously in chapter 17 of this same book when he faced the Philistine. Then he was trusting in the Lord. His talk was all about God's power. "The battle is the Lord's." David's downward path began when he stopped trusting in God to protect him against the mad king and he fled in a panic to Samuel. He then took another downward slide when he left Naioth and Ramah in a panic and fled to Jonathan. David takes another leap downwards spiritually when he arranges for Jonathan to lie for him.

The situation is that the two young men want to find out whether it is safe for David to be in Saul's presence. There was an important feast the next day and it was agreed that David would not attend this banquet even though it was expected that the king's son-in-law would attend - also in light of David's important role in fighting the Philistines. How would Saul react to David not being there would give a clue as to his attitude towards David. So there is a plan worked out. Jonathan would watch Saul's reaction and would report back to David. They agreed a signal to be given so that David would know the outcome of the test and would run away if this was necessary. Saul did notice that David's seat was empty - not evidence of amazing faculties of observation on his part! He ignored David's absence on the first day but the next day he challenged Jonathan about David's absence. Then Jonathan told his father the lie that he had agreed with David. Saul told his father a lie, " David is away home to his family in Bethlehem. There is a special sacrifice being held there and his brother has ordered him to attend the family gathering." This was all a big lie and Saul was not deceived for a minute. He saw through the lies. Maybe Jonathan was not a convincing liar or else the substance of the lie was not credible. David did not get on particularly well with his family and he has not been too eager to go there previously. There are some people who are very convincing liars and there are other who give the game away by their body language. I wasted many hours listening to young people telling one lie after another and they thought that I would believe them. So this lie was totally pointless.

So was the signal that they had arranged. Saul lost his temper with Jonathan and accused him of bringing the family into disrepute. That is almost laughable - considering the conduct of this evil king. Saul accused his own son of being 'the son of a perverse and rebellious woman.' - interesting that he blamed Jonathan's mother! (verse 30) He savaged Jonathan for choosing to protect David. Saul's language is very extreme - 'Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?' [1 Samuel 20:30 NIV] If there was any doubt in Jonathan's mind of his father's hatred of David and his evil plans, this was totally dispelled when Saul ordered his son to bring David to him to have him executed. Then when Jonathan, bravely or foolishly, tried to defend David and ask what he had done to offend the king, Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan in blind anger. So Jonathan is very upset and has to pass on this news to David. There is an agreed signal using arrows and giving commands to the young boy who looked after his armour. But after all this coded signals, Jonathan and David meet in person and he is able to explain precisely the sequence of events. This prompts David to go into hiding again.

This whole episode was unnecessary. David must have had no doubts that Saul intended to kill him and that Jonathan was not able to protect him. David is understandably in despair and in a panic and he is not acting out of faith. He is not even behaving rationally. All this subterfuge is not what God wanted from his anointed king. The incident in chapter 20 does show clear evidence of Jonathan's genuine, selfless affection for David. But sadly, David is out of touch with the Lord and has left the place where God's presence was clearly demonstrated by the

power of the Spirit of God. David was safe at Naioth in Ramah because he was where the Holy Spirit was active and was protecting him from evil. He did not need to flee - he needed to learn to commit his ways to the Lord and trust in Him for protection.

This well-known hymn brings this study into New Testament times.

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer.

O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pains we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

[There is a video of this hymn being played by Anne Smith. See the Anne Smith Channel]

David: Deceit at Nob 03/04/2021

Read 1 Samuel Chapter 21

After the incident described in the previous Day Share when Jonathan warned David that Saul was still seeking to kill him, David is on the run again. It would be interesting to trace his journeys on a map. He was most likely travelling on foot and would have to be trying to avoid being detected by Saul's soldiers. David's life is lacking purpose and direction - he is fleeing from Saul and he leaves Gibeah and runs away to meet Samuel in Ramah and then back to Gibeah to meet with Jonathan and then he flees to Nob. Each time he is making a journey of around 5 kilometres over very mountainous territory.

He is also involved in a spiritual journey and it is downward. He is running headlong down a very steep hill - in a spiritual sense. Once you are on a downward slope, it is difficult to stop. Sadly, his journey to Nob provides clear evidence of his impoverished spiritual condition. Nob was a city between Gibeah (Saul's stronghold) and Jerusalem and when David arrived there he met with a priest by the name of Ahimelech (who was the great grandson of Eli [Day Share 20/02/2021]). Ahimelech was not delighted to see David. The text of verse 1 of this chapter tells us that Ahimelech was trembling when he saw this visitor. He guessed that this was bad news for him and he was right. Ahimelech would know that David was out of favour with King Saul and he would know that if he helped David, he would be making himself an enemy of Saul. The priest asks David why he is travelling on his own. This is the king's son-in-law, the victor of the battle at the Valley of Elah. Why does he not have a contingent of soldiers with him. David has probably to think on his feet. He is getting good at lying - a sign of a poor spiritual condition. He has no conscience about telling a deliberate lie to this man of God. David claims that he is on official business and that it is top secret. He is going to be meeting up with men at a pre-arranged meeting place. This is all a complete fabrication. I am not sure that Ahimelech really believed David. David then asks him for food and this presents a real challenge for the priest. He explains to David that he has only what was considered 'holy bread' which was supposed to be eaten only by priests. David wants five loaves - supposedly for the other young men he is going to meet. He then says that they are in a fit moral condition to partake of this bread - as they have been celibate during this secret expedition. So Ahimelech gives David the holy bread. In the New Testament Jesus gives endorsement to Ahimelech's actions which were strictly speaking unlawful but he was acting out of mercy for this young man who seemed to be in a desperate situation (Mark 2:25-26).

David then asks Ahimelech for a weapon - either a spear or a sword. This does not seem the best place to go to obtain a weapon. The puzzled priest has to explain that there is only a sword available - interestingly, it is the sword that David took from Goliath and used to cut off the giant's head. "That will do nicely," says David.

There was a witness lurking in the shadows during this strange meeting between the anointed king and the priest. It was a man named Doeg who is described as an Edomite and the chief of Saul's herdsman. So it is clear where his loyalty will lie. This man betrays David and Ahimelech to Saul and this results in the death of Ahimelech and all the other priests. When Saul orders the execution of these priests, there is a reluctance to carry out his order - Saul's servants are afraid to strike the priests. But Doeg, this sleekit man, has no hesitation in carrying out the slaughter.

So David's actions that day resulted in the deaths of innocent priests. By the way, the last words Ahimelech spoke were to defend David's integrity whom he describes as especially 'faithful to Saul' - and honoured in Saul's house. He pointed out that Saul had recognised David's loyalty by allowing him to become the king's son-in-law and the captain over his bodyguard.

There are often consequences of our actions. David's deceitful conduct that day led to the slaughter of Ahimelech and his fellow priests. David should never have put this man in such a situation where he had to go against Saul in order to help David. He felt morally obliged to provide assistance largely on account of David's reputation and past history. This is a sad story but David will sink even further in his backsliding.

I wonder if David had the deaths of these priests on his conscience in later life. In my own experience, Satan reminds me of mistakes I made years ago and tries to undermine my faith.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see Him there
who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died,
my sinful soul is counted free;
for God the just is satisfied
to look on Him and pardon me,
to look on Him and pardon me.
[Mission Praise 975]

David: In the Gutter at Gath 05/04/2021

Read 1 Samuel 21: 10 - 15

It is hard to believe that this is the same person who was facing the Philistine giant when he was the only one prepared to take on the might of this enemy of Israel. In chapter 17, David is trusting completely in God on account of his previous experience of God's deliverance when a bear and a lion, on separate occasions, were attacking the flock of sheep he was looking after. Despite his youthfulness, David shows remarkable courage and faith in God and stands out in marked contrast to King Saul and his son Jonathan. All the Israelite warriors are intimidated by this well-armed soldier who threatens them on a daily basis. Then David saw Goliath's actions in a different light from other Israelites - even his own brothers. What has happened to David's faith in God? He had declared then that the battle is the Lord's and that the Lord would bring complete victory on the battlefield regardless of the height of the enemy soldiers or the weight of their armour. In other words, David was saying that nothing is impossible with the God of Israel. Goliath was defying Jehovah who was on the side of the Israelites. His actions were an insult to the One God of Israel.

Now David has lost his faith in God. He can only see an uncertain future and he is afraid. He is afraid of Saul - the same person who was not prepared to face Goliath even with all his skill, weapons and armour. He is afraid of Saul despite the fact that, again and again, God has delivered David out of Saul's hands - even when he threw a spear at him from close range. David has forgotten that the battle is the Lord's and the same God who took control of the stone which David aimed at the well-armed Philistine and directed this to the right spot to kill Goliath instantly will deflect any javelin thrown by Saul at David. David has forgotten that the Lord has even used Saul's own daughter to preserve David's life and that his greatest ally is Jonathan, Saul's son.

So David is in a state of blind panic. He has been a man on the run - running to Samuel and then running away from Samuel to Jonathan and then running to the priest at Nob. This last episode would result in the death of 85 priests as an act of senseless revenge by Saul. But now David has been on the run again and he has headed off in the other direction towards the Philistines. That's right - David has decided that he would be safer with the enemies of his own nation. Now, of course, David had already made his reputation as the scourge of the Philistines - apart from being the hero of the battle in the valley of Elah. David had slaughtered 200 of them just to pay the dowry or bride price Saul was insisting on for the privilege of marrying his daughter. He had been successful in several forays against the Philistines. Does he imagine that they will welcome him with open arms? Does he think that they will not recognise him?

Anyway, David decides to pay a visit to Gath. That's interesting because Gath was the hometown of the deceased giant, Goliath whose head David had taken off using his victim's own sword. David pays a visit to a man who is described as a king of Gath. His name is Achish. It would seem that David's plan is to join this man's army as a mercenary. After all, he has previous experience on the battlefield. Notice the closing words of chapter 21 - Achish says, "shall this man come into my house?" and this may refer to David wanting to serve Achish in some capacity as a servant. But he is recognised - his cover is blown. The servants of Achish realise who he is. They say, "Is this not the king of the land?" This is a bit puzzling because David was not really king - Saul was still on the throne. Are they aware that David has been anointed as king? They certainly know that he is very popular with the Israelites. They know that there is a song about his success against the champion of the Philistines. They know about the women dancing and chanting. "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." The Philistines seem to have good intelligence about what is happening in Israel. They must have had spies gathering information and reporting back to their headquarters. They knew that this David was a threat to Saul. They would guess that he has fled from Saul and is in a desperate state. David realises that his life is in danger.

So he adopts a strange strategy. He pretends to be mad and he puts on a very convincing show of madness before the 'king' of Gath. David slavers down his beard and claws on the doors of the gate. This is a very sad state of affairs for the same man who had walked down into the valley of Elah to face Goliath. David is commended in the Bible record for his wise conduct - when he was the subject of much hero-worship by the Israelite women. Here he is feigning madness. There is no trust in God. There is no dependence on the One God, Jehovah who had delivered the nation from Egypt in a miraculous way.

As I read these few verses, the Lord is reminding me that there is no depths to which I could not sink. My eldest daughter shared a story with me of a young teacher who had committed a serious offence and was facing being struck off the General Teaching Council which would mean the end of his career. I was saddened when I read the newspaper article. I uttered a prayer of thanksgiving for God's grace in my life preserving me from moral and spiritual disaster. A verse from the New Testament came to mind

'So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!' [1 Corinthians 10: 12 NIV] The context of this verse is learning lessons from the Israelites who were disobedient and were punished by God. If we are tempted to judge David harshly, there is an assumption at the back of our mind that we would never stoop to this - turning our back on God and seeking help from those who hate God and then resorting to such a degrading spectacle as pretending to be insane. The lesson I have to learn - and I will address this to myself - every day that I live I depend on God's grace to keep me from the gutter. I have a mental picture of David in Gath and it's not a pretty picture. He would not have shared that video on Facebook if this incident had taken place in 2021. Remember this is the Lord's anointed. I know that David had walked into this situation as a result of his lack of faith but this is also a reminder that living for God will not be a glamorous occupation - think of the life of Paul the apostle (See 2 Corinthians 11:23-33)

If someone was reading the biography of David for the first time and had no idea that he did in fact become the king of Israel and was responsible for writing many of the Psalms, this reader might begin to speculate that David's career is over. He might be anointed as the next king, but that does not mean that he can ever recover from where David finds himself at the end of chapter 21 of 1st Samuel. This imaginary reader, of course, would be very much mistaken. God had not given up with David. God had still plans for David and he would be restored and would recover to be used by God for future service. I have often quoted a verse from the Old Testament which refers to the coming Messiah

*A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.* [Isaiah 42:3 ESV]



I have to be honest. There have been times in my life when I have been a bruised reed or a faintly burning wick. Reeds, which grew on the river banks, were very useful for making strong structures such as baskets, boats and houses. Mud could be applied to the criss-cross framework to make for a watertight construction. The verse in Isaiah speaks about a reed which has become bruised perhaps due to the careless actions of humans. It isn't longer fit for purpose and will be discarded and thrown on the ground to be trampled and destroyed. However, the Saviour, the perfect Servant of Isaiah's prophecy, is far more gracious and tolerant. He could see usefulness in me when others couldn't and would have quickly written me off. He applied the healing touch to my wounds and fitted me to the planned structure he was making.

The flax wick would have provided essential light in a house with no natural light. The wick, however, is not producing enough light. There is barely a flicker from this smouldering wick. The natural inclination would be to snuff out this light. I am glad that my Lord did not do that when the spiritual light was almost extinguished in my life due to sin and unbelief. He fanned the flame to produce better light for His glory.

David was a dimly burning flax - but the light was not extinguished and it was fanned into a flame. Due to the cruelty of Saul, David had become a broken reed - but God did not discard him. He was restored for future service and he would take over as King of Israel in God's time. This is a real encouragement for us when we feel that we have failed God and we are broken and disheartened. God is the God of the second chance.

It is amazing that David escapes with his life after this visit to Achish in Gath. God preserved him despite the fact that he has not been living by faith and he is out of touch with God. God worked in the heart of Achish to make him see David no longer as an enemy. Chapter 21 ends with Achish stating "I don't need any more madmen." This was not a compliment to his servants. "I don't want this fellow in my service - I have enough idiots and madmen." And this is the cue for David to make a hasty but subtle departure from the land of the Philistines.

David: Two Natures Collide 07/04/2021

In the last Day Share we saw that David had sunk very low spiritually and was pretending to be mad after seeking refuge among the enemies of the Israelites. This leads to a discussion of the two natures which are present in David. There are times when David is acting on faith and is led by the Holy Spirit. The best example is found in chapter 17 of 1st Samuel. There are other examples when he is humble and dependent on God - especially when he was becoming a pop idol of a sort - the one about whom the women were singing. He kept humble and acted with discretion.

But things began to go wrong and when he began to slip and slide, he was heading in a downward direction. It is interesting to work out when the decline started - maybe when he decided to slaughter 200 Philistine men to

make a point to Saul and obtain a wife whom he never really loved. Or was it when he fled in panic from Saul's palace and made his way to Samuel - although this was a good place to go and Samuel would give David spiritual advice and encouragement. Was there a lurch downward when he left Samuel and ran to Jonathan in a panic. He was certainly in a poor spiritual condition when he paid a fateful visit to the house of God and the priests at Nob. He was even lower when he ran away to the Philistines.

At one stage in his early life, he has lost his faith and trust in God and fear has taken hold of him. "Instead of being occupied with the Lord, he was obsessed with his enemy." [A.W. Pink: The Life of David; Kindle Edition]

So there is this inconsistent behaviour on David's part. He is capable of lofty spiritual conduct and he is capable of lies and deceit and cowardice. He sometimes acts in a spiritual manner and other times he is clearly acting from his own sinful nature. Here is a verse from Paul's letter to the Galatians which highlights the conflict between the two natures in the believer.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
[Galatians 5: 16-18 NIV]

Notice the conflict is highlighted in this passage - 'the flesh (our sinful nature) desires what is contrary to the Spirit' and conversely - 'the Spirit [desires] what is contrary to the flesh.' This is a very real battle taking place within the child of God. There is no such conflict in the heart of the non-Christian. S/he is only governed by the sinful nature. When we became a Christian, the Holy Spirit came to live within us - to take up residence. We realised that things which we considered to be ok and were not considered by our friends to be 'bad' were suddenly shown to be sins. We developed a more sensitive conscience under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit. If David had been led by the Spirit, he would not have been running wildly from Saul. If David had been walking in the Spirit, he would not have needed to lie and fake madness.

David was going through a hard time but God was permitting these bitter experiences in order to teach David a lesson. His faith was being put to the test. When we are going through times like that, it is very easy to begin to doubt that God loves us and still cares for us. Maybe we are experiencing some hard times in our lives. Maybe we have the modern equivalent of a Saul who is our enemy and is bringing us down spiritually and psychologically. David needed to think less about Saul and think more about God. God was still as powerful as he was when David was facing his giant. God was still on David's side and wanted him to be the next king.

David is not the only example from the Old Testament of a person who has enjoyed mountain-top experiences with God but has also sunk to the depths of sin and despair. Here are some other examples.

- Noah obeyed God when he was instructed to build an ark but later on he had a drunken episode which brought him shame.
- Abraham left his pagan family and city and followed God in a journey of faith but he pretended that Sarah was not his wife when he was travelling through Egypt. Later, he listened to Sarah and had a child to Sarah's maid instead of waiting for the son which God had promised to him
- Jacob had a very chequered life experience - conspiring with his mother to trick his father and to obtain the privileges of being firstborn by deceit. But he had several encounters with God and his name was changed to Israel.
- Moses was the great leader of the Israelites whom God used to deliver them from slavery in Egypt and lead them across the Red Sea and led them through the wilderness for forty years. He too had his times of disobedience and lack of faith in God. For example, he killed an Egyptian who was bullying and abusing one of Moses own people. He also lost his temper with the Israelites and struck the rock in anger and on another occasion he threw down the stones containing the ten commandments.
- God used Elijah to stand firm against the prophets of Baal when the whole nation was turning away from God but he gave way to fear and despondency at the actions of King Ahab's wife Jezebel.

This is not an excuse for us to lower our moral and spiritual standards This does not mean that it is ok to sin. It is not an excuse for us to sin so that we will experience God's grace and forgiveness (See Romans 6:1-2) It is, however, a recognition that people whom we often imagine are on a higher spiritual plain than us are just as dependent on God's grace each day as we are. They are human and have the same sinful nature as we have. Jesus was the only human being who did not sin. The short lesson is this - "So let the one who thinks he is standing be careful that he does not fall." [1 Corinthians 10:12 NET] This verse was quoted in the previous Day Share but it is worth quoting again.

David had to repent of his sin and wandering away from God - the Bible uses the word 'backsliding' to describe this condition. We will discuss this in the next Day Share.

David: Repentance and Restoration 09/04/2021

For today's Day Share we are going to go back to the book of Psalms to find a Psalm written by David at this desperate time in his life. When we studied the Psalms previously, we very rarely referred to the inscriptions which we have at the beginning of some of the Psalms. In Psalm 34, there is an inscription which gives us some idea of when this psalm was written.

Written by David, when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, causing the king to send him away. [This

is how the inscription is translated in the New English Translation]

In 1 Samuel the king of the city of Gath is called Achish and he may also have another name which is used in the Psalms. Here he is called Abimelech. However, the inscription clearly identifies this psalm with the incident which we studied in the Day Share called [David: In the Gutter at Gath 05/04/2021](#). What is clear that this psalm is written by a man who is in a better spiritual condition than David was when this incident occurred. There has been a time of repentance - David has acknowledged his fears and anxieties before God and he has been restored to fellowship with God. He describes this experience in verse 4 of Psalm 34.

I sought the Lord's help and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. [Psalm 34:4 NET]

I want to point out that the NET Bible has added the word 'help' to make it easier to understand the verse but the word help is not in the original Hebrew text. David sought the Lord. You might think that I am splitting hairs - and they are in short supply in my case! I want to suggest that this is more than just a cry from someone in distress - though he was obviously crying for help. This is the prayer of a man who has realised that he needs to get back to fellowship with God. He has been out of touch with God and he repents of his sin and he knows communion with God - God answers his prayer. He acknowledges that the problem is his fears - but when he turned to the Lord he experienced deliverance from his fears.

He gives us a bit more detail of this experience in other verses

This oppressed man cried out and the Lord heard; he saved him from all his troubles. The Lord's angel camps around the Lord's loyal followers and delivers them. [Psalm 34: 6-7]

David was an oppressed man or a poor man. He was in a helpless state - he had no food when he was at Nob and he was desperate for food. He had no weapons and he took the sword which he had previously used to behead the giant and which was stored in the house of the Lord. He had nowhere to go in safety and he had no one to help him - at least that is how David had viewed the situation. So he turned to the Lord for help and acknowledging his sinful state. David then experienced the blessing of divine deliverance and protection. He sees that those who are loyal to God are in a bubble - they are protected by the Lord's angel. By the time David has written Psalm 34, he has realised that prayer is essential but it is also effective.

The godly cry out and the Lord hears; he saves them from all their troubles. The Lord is near the broken-hearted; he delivers those who are discouraged.

Psalms 34:17-18 NET

There is an interesting reference to lying and deception in this Psalm. Remember David's behaviour at Gath when he had been forced to pretend he is insane in order to save his life. Remember that he had previously lied to Ahimelech the priest in God's house at Nob. He had pretended he was on a secret mission with Saul's approval. I also suggest that he lied about having companions with him. David has now realised that the man or woman who is trusting in God does not need to lie.

Come children! Listen to me! I will teach you what it means to fear the Lord. Do you want to really live? Would you love to live a long, happy life? Then make sure you don't speak evil words or use deceptive speech! [Psalms 34:11-13 NET]

He has also grasped that there is no need to lie or scheme in order to get essential foodstuffs. God's supermarket has shelves which are well stocked. One divine title is El Jireh which means 'the Lord will provide.'

Even young lions sometimes lack food and are hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

[Psalms 34:10 NET]

I have deliberately rearranged the order of this amazing Psalm. It begins in a note of praise which distinguishes it from many other psalms which begin in a mood of lament or even despair. Here are the opening words of Psalm 34.

I will praise the Lord at all times; my mouth will continually praise him. I will boast in the Lord; let the oppressed hear and rejoice! Magnify the Lord with me! Let's praise his name together! I sought the Lord's help and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. [Psalms 34:1-4 NET]

We are not told exactly when David experienced this change of heart. It may have been a gradual process or it may have happened suddenly. My suggestion is that, in God's providence, David found himself in a good place to reflect, not only on his situation, but more importantly on the Lord whom he had trusted since his boyhood experiences on the hillside guarding his sheep against predators. In the next Day Share we will visit David in the God-given shelter he had provided for him - not a palace or a hotel - but a cave. The important thing was that he had time to meditate and reflect.

While I was working, it was very challenging for me to find time alone with God to pray and study His Word. Retirement has its benefits. So does Lockdown!

David: Cave of Adullam 11/04/2021

Read 1 Samuel Chapter 22

David has been scuttling from one place to another because Saul is jealous of him and wants to destroy him. David had even been so desperate that he crossed into enemy territory in the land of the Philistines. This was no safer than anywhere else and David is on the run again. This time he takes refuge in a cave at a place called Adullam which was halfway between Gath (the town of Goliath) and Bethlehem (the hometown of David himself). This area had limestone cliffs which provided ample places to shelter and to be hidden from Saul's soldiers scouring the countryside looking for the king's 'enemy.'

David is not far from his own family and we have an interesting reference to them. Remember that his father had failed to tell Samuel that he had another son when the prophet had arrived to anoint a replacement king for the rejected Saul [See Day Share David: Left Outside 02/03/2021]. In 1 Samuel chapter 17, David is sent to take food and supplies to his older brothers who are fighting the Philistines. Eliab is very sarcastic with David and suggests that he is too young and inexperienced to be anywhere near a battlefield. [See 1 Samuel 17: 28-30] But things have moved on and perhaps David's family are being persecuted by Saul. Saul was prepared to stoop to any level to attack David and it is very likely that he would have sent his henchmen to check that David was not taking refuge in his home in Bethlehem. We can well imagine the arrival of soldiers to check out whether David was hiding somewhere in the house. They would have probably searched the house thoroughly and they may well have threatened David's father (and mother, though she is never mentioned) and his seven brothers. So David's family hear news that David is in hiding in a cave at Adullam and they pay him a visit. This was not a pleasant family reunion. There would be real anxiety and distress as the family recount the recent events. All the members of the family are in danger and, probably Jesse and David's mother are elderly and vulnerable. In fact, it is not safe for David's family to remain in the cave and David has to escort them or maybe because it was not a suitable lodging for his elder parents, David has to take them to a place called Mizpeh in Moab. You will remember that Ruth came from Moab and she was David's great grandmother. So David has to make a very difficult journey with his family all the way down to the Dead Sea which was a descent of 3,000 feet (914 metres) and then they would have to climb almost as much again to the plateau of Moab.

There are others who join with David in this cave. There is a sad list of those who joined David.

- Everyone who was in distress or was suffering hardship
- Everyone who was in debt
- Everyone who was bitter in soul or who was discontented

In other words, these are the social outcasts who take sides with David, the traitor and enemy of the King. Those who had nothing to lose from their association with a despised man made the decision to throw in their lot with David. The socially respectable prefer to side with the reigning monarch - King Saul. And yet David is able to turn these disaffected people into a powerful army of 400 men who would take on the Philistines as described in chapter 23. David must have had leadership qualities to inspire such loyalty in his followers. He became their captain and they accepted his orders. When we looked at Luke's Gospel we saw that this gospel was the gospel of the social outcast. [See Day Share entitled Luke's Gospel - Key Themes 04/01/2020] It is a sad reflection on human nature that it takes hard times for people to see things from a true perspective.

I find it interesting to reflect on this incident. Firstly, it is not a huge number who make up this group of outcasts. I would have expected a larger number of people to have been suffering hardship and I would have expected a larger number to have been discontented with Saul's rule. Is it possible that there were many others who came into at least one of the categories of the Adullam cave team but they did not join with David. That would take courage and loyalty. It was an act of faith. They were siding with the enemy of the state. As Christians, we are taking side with the Lord Jesus the Messiah who is rejected by the world today. We are not following the popular course of action. We are going against the rule of Satan. We are challenging his authority on the basis of the work of Christ when he defeated Satan by His death and resurrection.

Secondly, I agree with A.W. Pink when he says that this was a great opportunity for David to reflect on his situation and to get right with God. He had times of seclusion and isolation. The cave was probably a large underground cavern with plenty of small places to be alone with God and to meditate on God's word. David's life had been hectic and now God was saying to him that he needed to rest and recharge his spiritual batteries. Here is a quotation from this writer of a past generation:

"If David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he would never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his latter days." Pink is referring to the terrible sin which David committed when he lusted for another man's wife and then had a child by her. He then had Bathsheba's husband killed to silence him and to allow him to marry her." [A.W. Pink: The Life of David Kindle Edition]

But that is in much later in the story of David. In this chapter, Saul is still on the throne and David is in hiding.

David: Lessons in Hard Times 13/04/2021

My plan is to pause the Day Shares on the Life of David and hopefully return to this subject later. For now, we are returning to John Gospel to complete our study of this wonderful Gospel. In December 2020 we reached chapter 12 of John's Gospel and we will continue where we left off with the Upper Room ministry of the Lord and then his arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection.

In today's Day Share I would like to conduct an overview of the life of David up to this point. We are pausing our study while David is still in hiding from Saul and he will not become king until after the death of Saul. Despite his great victory over Goliath, life for David has been hard. This seems to be very relevant for us in 2021 when many of us are finding life tough because of the restrictions due to the pandemic. Weather was kind to us in the first

months of Lockdown in spring of 2020 but the poor weather coupled with the depressing statistics of increasing hospitalisation and deaths around the new year made life tough. Somewhere in the subconscious we may be asking the question which David asked so frequently in the Psalms - How long O Lord? (Psalm 13:1; Psalm 35: 7; Psalm 70:5; Psalm 80:4; Psalm 89:46; Psalm 90: 13; Psalm 94:3) These are not all Psalms of David but the events of David's life so far would give a strong suggestion that he would be asking God if there was no end in sight.

- The victim of Saul's jealous rage when a javelin was thrown at him several times.
- Having to run from Saul's palace and to have nowhere to hide.
- Having to escape from his own house when Saul's henchmen are outside waiting to catch him and have him executed.
- Trying unsuccessfully to take refuge with Samuel and his school of prophets, and later with the priests at Nob, and then going to the Philistines at Gath.
- Being forced to shelter in a cave at Adullam

All this time David is aware that Samuel has anointed him as Israel's next king. Months turned into years and still David is hiding in a series of caves. Humanly speaking, it seems that he will die in the desert or in the mountains and will never become King. This is a real challenge for David. And all the time his life is in danger. God could have destroyed Saul and allowed David to come into his kingdom. But God is never in a hurry to act. God had important, even essential, lessons to teach David during his years of trial and tribulation. In short, he had to learn to depend entirely on God. Admittedly, he had shown great faith in the incident at the Valley of Elah in chapter 17 of 1st Samuel. He had also shown great humility when he was being praised so much by Israelite women. But God wanted him to learn what it was like to depend on God each day for food and shelter and survival. There is a lovely verse from the book of Habakkuk which applies to this situation and also to our own situation in 2021.

For the revelation awaits an appointed time;
it speaks of the end
and will not prove false.
Though it linger, wait for it;
it will certainly come
and will not delay. [Habakkuk 2:3 NIV]

I like the phrase 'appointed time' - God has a time appointed for things to happen. He had an appointed time for David to ascend the throne. He has an appointed time for churches to meet again and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs from the heart. Notice that Habakkuk says - 'though it linger, wait for it.' 'It will certainly come and will not delay.' The first generation Christians were waiting for the second coming of the Lord. He had been crucified and buried but he had risen from the grave and ascended to heaven. He had promised to return. He is coming again. He will certainly come and will not delay. It may seem that centuries and millennia have passed and still we are awaiting his return. But - though it linger - wait for it. Times may be hard and may get harder. They are certainly much harder for Christians in many parts of the world - North Korea, for example, China or India. Pastor Munshi and his wife Jaini became Christians three years ago and he began preaching the Gospel in his village. Hindu extremists warned him to stop. So he and his family left the village and held worship services in their new home. One afternoon, militants arrived and they abducted Munshi and took him into the jungle and shot him dead. Jaini and her four children took refuge with a Christian family nearby. Their lives are also in danger. This is just one story of many persecuted Christians around the world.

But God is still on the throne. He will act in his own time and there is a day coming when wrongs will be put right when our King is given His throne.

Our Lord is now rejected,
And by the world disowned,
By the many still neglected,
And by the few enthroned;
But soon He'll come in glory!
The hour is drawing nigh,
For the crowning day is coming
By and by.

Chorus

*O the crowning day is coming!
Is coming by and by!
When our Lord shall come in power
And glory from on high!
O the glorious sight will gladden
Each waiting, watchful eye,
In the crowning day that's coming
By and by.*

The heavens shall glow with splendour;
But brighter far than they,
The saints shall shine in glory,

As Christ shall them array:
The beauty of the Saviour
Shall dazzle every eye,
In the crowning day that's coming
By and by.

Our pain shall then be over,
We'll sin and sigh no more;
Behind us all our sorrow,
And nought but joy before.
A joy in our Redeemer,
As we to Him are nigh,
In the crowning day that's coming
By and by.

Let all who look for "hasten"
The coming joyful day,
By earnest consecration
To walk the narrow way;
By gathering in the lost ones,
For whom our Lord did die,
For the crowning day that's coming
By and by.

[There is a video on the website with Anne Smith playing this lovely old hymn.]

Bible Quotations

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version) copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV Edition: 2016 The ESV© text has been reproduced in cooperation with and by permission of Good News Publishers. Unauthorised reproduction of this publication is prohibited. All rights reserved

Where a Bible text is marked NET it is from the New English Translation. NET Bible© copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com>. All rights reserved.

Where a Bible text is marked NLT it is from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004, 2007, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois, 60188. all rights reserved.